

Pocket Series
No. 110.

BEADLE'S

Illuminated.
Ten Cents.

POCKET NOVELS



Nick, the Scout.

110



NICK, THE SCOUT;

OR,

THE DEATH MAN OF THE NAVAJOES.

BY W. J. FAMILTON,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING POCKET NOVELS:

No. 13. THE FRENCH SPY.

No. 30. EAGLE EYE.

No. 102. WILD RUBE.

NEW YORK:

BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,

98 WILLIAM STREET.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1873, by
BEADLE AND ADAMS,
in the office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

NICK, THE SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

THE OUTCAST QUEEN.

A WILD mountain pass, broken gorges, deep, solemn ravines clothed in pine and sage, the only growth of this desolate place.

An appalling shriek, so wild, fierce and intense, so full of heartfelt agony that it seemed to pierce to the very marrow, was heard within the pass, and the single listener looked up, aghast, toward the elevated platform from whence the sound seemed to come. It was repeated, a moment after, and, impelled by an impulse which he could not resist, the man began to climb the rocky side of the ravine.

He was in mountain garb, and so huge of limb that he might almost be called a giant. His belt bore the usual weapons of the mountaineer—revolvers, knife and hatchet, while the weapon, *par excellence*, of the mountain and prairie—the rifle—was slung at his back, as he used both hands in making the ascent.

In height the man was at least six feet two inches, with a corresponding breadth of shoulder and girth of loins. His face was that of an Irishman full of genial good-nature, although there was a stern, determined look upon it now which was never seen except in the hour of battle or danger.

Up he went, crawling from shelf to shelf, until he reached the summit of the rocky ledge. Then he came at once upon a strange scene, such an one as his eyes had seldom seen in the wild life of the border.

Three persons stood upon the platform, a Navajo chief, a woman of the same nation, and a white girl of rare beauty, whose white skin and sunny hair contrasted strangely with the dark faces of the others. The woman was kneeling on

the rock, clasping the white girl in her arms, and over them towered the chief, his dark face full of fury. He was a powerful man, blazing in barbaric ornaments—one of that great tribe who had made the cowardly Mexicans bow before their arms again and again. He wore golden bracelets, a collar of the same rich material rudely beaten into shape, and about his forehead gleamed a sort of crown of gold, set with stones, which, whatever their quality, flashed in the sunlight like diamonds of the purest water.

He stood with his back to the cliff, looking down fiercely at the beautiful Indian girl—for she *was* beautiful—kneeling at his feet. The women of the Navajoes, more than any other tribe, except, perhaps, the Comanche, are mixed with the blood of the Mexican, hundreds of whom every year are carried captive into the Indian villages, and become the wives of chiefs. This woman, it was plain to see, was one of these, and held high rank in the tribe, for her dress and ornaments were far more costly than that which is worn by the common women. The giant scout paused with his head concealed behind the sage-bushes, and listened, for he could see that the chief, for the present at least, did not mean to harm the woman.

"Kara," he said, in a low tone, full of deep feeling, "you have been the wife of a great chief; he has held you in his bosom and has loved you well. When you spoke in his ear it was like the music of the birds to him, and his heart beat when he saw you coming. The wife of such a chief should remember that her hand is beneath the foot of her husband, that she must obey him in all things, and question not the work of his hands. But see: I go away and leave in your care a prisoner who holds the whole future of the Navajo nation in the hollow of her hand. I come back and find that Kara—Kara, the daughter of a chief and my wife—has taken this prisoner and fled away toward the great villages of the white men. Ha! a chief should strike such a wife as that."

The look of wild fury came back to his face, his hand dropped to the hilt of a knife, and the waiting scout cautiously drew a revolver from his girdle and held it ready. He did not cock it yet, for he knew that the slight click of the lock would be heard by the chief. The woman bowed her

head patiently, and waited for her death, but it did not come.

"No, no, Kara. There is another fate in store for you—a worse punishment than the sharp knife in my hand. I might kill you if I would, but you would be at rest. I can do better than that by letting you go where you will, never to return to the village of the Navajoes or to the bosom of the great chief who has been your husband. I have spoken."

The woman, with a wild cry, released her hold on the white girl, and fell at his feet, raising her hands pleadingly.

"Say not that, Adanta, chief of the Navajoes," she pleaded. "Let me die for my fault, for I can not live cast out from your heart and home. See: I offer my breast to the sharp knife, and I am ready to die. I *pray* for death at your hands."

Twice Adanta raised his knife as if he would take her at her word; as many times the finger of the giant scout closed upon the trigger of his revolver, but he saw that the chief hesitated, and there was something in his noble face which told the scout that he could not find in his heart to destroy the woman who had lain in his bosom, even though faithless to him.

"But see, Kara," said the chief. "I could not lift my hand against the woman I have loved beyond all others. My heart is very strong, but it is weak as water when I think of laying you dead at my feet. If you have any heart, remember the wickedness it has done in flying with the White Sunbeam, upon whom the whole Navajo nation leaned as upon a strong spear. Speak, Kara, and tell me why you fled?"

"I looked upon the face of the Sunbeam, and it was very beautiful," replied the woman, moaning. "I knew that her friends wept for her in the far-off village, and that they would bless me if I gave the prisoner back to their arms."

"Did you forget that Adanta had a son, woman of the bad heart?" hissed the chief. "Do you not know that *he* weeps for his mother in the lodge of the Navajo, and puts out his little hands for the woman who will come back no more? Go; you have looked upon the face of your boy for the last time, and this is your punishment. Adanta has no worse to give you."

He had spoken the truth. The human brain could not have conceived a worse punishment for the Indian mother than that which separated her forever from the child she loved, and Adanta knew it well. Yet there was something in his face which showed that he had some sympathy for the unfortunate woman who had placed herself without the pale of the tribe, an outcast and a wanderer forever. Yet he stood like a statue, never moving a muscle of his stern face, as the discarded wife pleaded for death at his hands, simply saying, at intervals:

"Never shall you see the face of your child—never again!"

The wild pleading continued. She clasped his knees with both arms, and prayed him, by the sun-god they adored, to let her die there, in the midst of the solitude; but he moved not, still bending upon her the same fixed, intent gaze.

"Why waste words when a chief has spoken?" he said, at length. "Go; the world is before you; dwell where you will, for the hand of Adanta will not be raised against you. The Sunbeam is mine."

As he spoke he raised a sort of bone amulet to his lips and breathed through it. A shrill whistle was heard, and, as if by magic, a hundred armed warriors sprung into view, clambering over the rocks toward the chief; clad in the gay garb of the Navajoes, their cloth tunics, yellow leggings and helmet-shaped caps adding to their warlike appearance. They shouted in delight as they saw that Adanta had retaken the White Sunbeam, and that Kara was at his feet.

"Warriors and chiefs," cried Adanta, "you see before you a faithless woman, who would have robbed the great nation of the Navajoes of their chief prisoner, upon whom a great prophesy rests. Her feet were swift, but ours were swifter, and behold, she lies at my feet."

"Let her die!" cried the band, as with one voice.

The chief raised his hand in a solemn and impressive gesture.

"No, Navajoes; you speak not wisely in this. We take away her child—she is no longer a daughter of a chief or the wife of Adanta; she can not dwell in the lodges of the Navajoes, and we let her live. Who is there among you who would not rather die?"

The Navajoes looked at each other in mute admiration. To them this was the refinement of punishment, worse than the torture at the stake, and it was plain that they agreed with him.

The scout had sunk down below the face of the cliff, for he felt that the company was getting too many for one of his retiring disposition. But he could hear every word.

"Come forward, It-a-ha-nah," cried Adanta. "Take the white Sunbeam to your care, and guard her well. Away with her to the Navajo town. As for us, let us see if we are not lords of the plain, in spite of the Mexican dogs. Kara, go your ways, and be more faithful to any who give you shelter in the coming time. Adanta has forgotten that such a woman has ever dwelt near his heart. Warriors and chiefs, away!"

Kara started up in speechless agony, stretched out her hands toward the retiring figure of her husband, but could not speak. The great band filed slowly past, looking at her with stony faces, and pointing the finger of scorn at her. Foremost among them was the black-browed chief, It-a-ha-nah, who grasped by the wrist the golden-haired girl who had been the cause of all this trouble. Adanta stood upon a rock, looking down with a lordly air upon his men as they filed through, their spear-heads glittering in the sun-rays, toward the place where they had left their horses some time before. He did not move until the last man had passed through; then, with a haughty gesture of disdain, he was gone.

Kara uttered an agonized scream and fell prostrate upon the rocks in a dead faint. The scout crouched behind the rocks until satisfied that none of the Navajoes would return, when he sprung up and raised the head of the fallen woman on his knee.

"The curse av all good min on the head av ye, Adanta!" he hissed, with a strong Irish accent. "I'll make it sorry work for ye, wan day or ither, be me sowl! Whist, darlin'; take a sup av the craythur, and much good may it do ye."

He placed his canteen to her lips and tried to get her to drink. Failing in that, he put a little upon the white lips, and pouring some into his palm, bathed her nostrils. She came back to life with a gasp, and, as she saw the face bend

ing over her, would have started from him with a cry of terror, but he held her fast.

"Aisy now, mavourneer. dbelish—aisy—aisy! Nick O' Connor is not the man ye made fear, the laste taste in life. Say the wurrud, an' be me sowl I'll go afther that bla'g'ard av a Navajo an' make it moighty warm for him; see til that now."

The Indian woman ceased to struggle, for the face which bent above her was so full of honesty and good-will that even her clouded mind could comprehend that he meant kindly, although she could not understand a word he spoke. He saw her trouble, and managed to get out a few words in the Navajo tongue, enough to make her understand that he meant kindly to her.

"Kara will die," she said. "If Adanta will not give me death, knives are sharp and the river is deep. It will not be long before the Indian Queen will be at rest."

"Hush, now, hush!" said Nick, in an angry tone. "It's a poor use to put yersilf to, jumpin' intil the wather. Didn't I hear the chafe spake av a bit av a b'y that belongs til ye?"

The face of the woman changed at the mention of the boy, and the old agony came back.

"I have lost him!" she cried. "Did not Adanta say that I had seen his face for the last time?"

"Now look!" said Nick. "It's but a small matther for me to do, an' be the powers av mud, av ye promise not to make away wid yersilf, I'm the b'y will go into the Navajo village and bring ye the lad. Hear til that, now!"

A look of wild joy came into the woman's face for a moment, but it changed again as she remembered the dangers and difficulties attending such a course as he had suggested.

"No white man can go to the Navajo village unless he is a prisoner. The white man can not do as he says."

"I'll do it—I'll do it, or I'll forfeit me life," cried Nick. "Look now, it's plain til me that ye don't know the lad that's spakin' til ye. I'm a broth av a b'y, an' fightin' is milk punch til me; so say no more about it; I have a place where ye kin stay safely, an' I'll be the b'y to get the childer away from the chafe. It w'u'd be only fun for me."

The man acted as if he believed what he said, and, al-

though most of it was utterly unintelligible to the Indian woman, yet she made out that he reiterated his promise to go to the village of the Navajoes, and find her boy. With this new incentive to live, the woman followed him down a rugged mountain path, and, after a short walk down the ravine, they came to a place where another ravine crossed the first. Nick O'Connor turned down this place and came out upon a little circular valley, where two horses were grazing, and a man was seated before a rude hut, cleaning a rifle. He looked up as they approached, and his face expressed some astonishment as he saw the companion of Nick.

The occupant of the place was somewhat younger than Nick, not so tall by three inches, but hardly the person you would care to meet in a close grapple. He was a handsome young fellow, too, with curling brown hair and deep blue eyes, full of the same merry light which showed in those of the Irishman. He was of the same nation, though evidently a gentleman born and bred. His dress was of rich material, and his weapons of the finest make.

"What does this mean, Nick?" he said. "A captive princess?"

"It's nearer right ye are than ye might think, Mither Ned Dangerfield," said Nick, laughing. "This is the wife av the great chief Adanta, the Navajo, an' be me sowl she's a beauty."

"What is she doing here?" demanded Ned Dangerfield.

"Rest aisy, acushla!" replied Nick. "Faith it's a curious nation we are, an' we want to know all that's goin'. Sit ye down, an' I'll tell ye all the news."

They sat down, and Nick told his companion all that had happened since they parted. They were yet in close consultation, and Ned had announced his intention of aiding Nick in keeping his word with the Indian woman, when they heard the sound of feet on the soft turf, and a man, wounded by an arrow, dashed wildly into the little glen, and fell bleeding to the earth.

"Whoop!" cried Nick. "Take yer rifle, Ned, me darlin', let us see what we kin do. Whooroo!"

They snatched up their weapons, and darted hastily to the entrance of the valley, fully expecting to see the whole

Navajo band in close pursuit. To their surprise, Kara caught up her bow, and took her station in the pass, with an arrow fitted to the string.

CHAPTER II.

THE BATTLE IN THE PASS.

THEY had hardly taken up their position when the wild yells of the Navajoes rung through the pass, and twenty warriors appeared, charging furiously through the narrow space. The rifles came up slowly, surely, the blue eyes flashed along the leveled tubes, and a double crack broke the silence of the deserted place. The two leading savages leaped up in their saddles, their spears fell from their hands, and their horses, frightened by the sudden discharge, turned and dashed back among the Indians, throwing them into momentary confusion, and giving the Irishmen time to reload.

When the rifles were again ready, scarcely twenty yards intervened between the two brave men and their savage assailants, but, as before, the headmost men fell in their tracks, dead before they struck the earth. At the outset there had been but twenty of the Navajo band, and they were not now guided by a chief, as all who could claim that title had gone down in the first rush.

"Whoop!" cried Nick. "Tare an' ages, but we'll whap the divils now! I'm good for tin av thim in this place, an' be the same token, Ned, ye can wallop the rest. Revolvers, now."

Their "Colts" were ready, for, at this time that weapon was the leading arm of its kind. Sheltering themselves behind the bowlders which guarded the pass, these gallant men began to pour hot fire into the ranks of the astonished Indians, who, knowing nothing of the revolver, began to fear that they had been mistaken in the number of their enemies, and fell back in great confusion, leaving eight of their number upon the sod.

"Whillaloo! murther, and why w'u'd ye die?" howled Nick, dancing wildly to and fro behind the rocks. "We've bate him, be the powers av mud. Glory til the revolvers; it's themselves can do it, Ned, alannah."

"Hold yourself in, Nick," said Ned, laughing. "You are not at Donnybrook now, you know."

"Faith, and Donnybrook was a fool to this place, acushla! Deed an' we broke some hids, but the sorra a wan we c'u'dn't mudd wid a bit av plaster. But, look—see! It's scalps an' glory ye git here, wid no allowance. Whoop; I'm like to go mad wid glory."

"We are not done with them yet, my brave Nick. Those fellows will come back, for they are only consulting now, and will never leave all their friends to the mercy of your knife. Keep out of sight, Kara; we might get a flight of arrows."

She made a silent gesture of disdain, for he had spoken the last sentence in the Indian tongue, in the use of which he was an adept.

"Why should Kara live if she can die by a Navajo arrow? She is outcast from the great tribe. She will never see her child again;—let her die!"

"If ye talk that way any more, be me sowl ye'll make me angry," roared Nick. "Didn't I promise ye that I'd get the b'y for ye? What more d'ye want?"

"The way to the Navajo village is long, and there will be many warriors on the path. Tall Pine is very brave, but what is he against so many?"

"Sowl o' me body, Ned, but that's a fine name she gev me. Tall Pine; it's right ye are, mavourneen, but 'long ghost' w'd be better. Look out, now; thim divils are going to make a charge on fut."

Even as he spoke the Indians sprung from their saddles, pecked their horses, and taking their weapons, began to steal slowly toward the mouth of the pass, concealing themselves as much as possible behind the pines. As twelve of them yet remained, the odds were very much in their favor if they forced their way into the pass, and Nick saw the danger.

"Shoot close now, Ned, as ye iver shot in yer life. We must thin thim out before they come up til us."

They found this extremely difficult to do. The Indians were very watchful, stealing from cover to cover with such caution that it was next to impossible to get a shot at them, yet four were sent limping back to the horses before they got within pistol-shot. The number was now reduced to eight--fearful odds yet, if they dared to charge, but they are crouching under cover of the bushes, trying to get up their courage to the charging point, and each man courteously leaving it to another to *lead*, a position of uncommon danger. But, the sight of their companions, cumbering the gory sod, maddened them, and they sprung out together, separating as much as possible to distract the aim of their enemies.

Four shots were fired in all before they closed, and every bullet had its mission. They now stood four against two, and the Indians who remained were strong-limbed, brawny fellows, hideously painted, and thirsting for blood.

O'Connor was not the man to care for such small odds, and his voice had a joyous peal as he sprung to meet the coming savages, with no other weapon than a great club which he whirled about his head with the grace and skill which he had learned long since at the Irish fairs. Dangerfield was not far behind him, only he rushed into the combat with a pistol and knife. As they closed he fired the last remaining chamber of the revolver, causing a savage to come crushing to the earth, and rushed in, but too late to be of any service to Nick, who, more fleet of foot than he, had already closed.

"Talk of Donnybrook Fair!" he yelled. "Whoop! Take that, ye painted haythen."

Vain was the interposition of the knives and hatchets of the Indians. The first went down, his skull crushed like an egg-shell; the second received a kick in the stomach which sent the breath completely out of his body, while the third had time to strike once with the hatchet, and Nick, engaged with the others, had no time to arrest the blow. He saw it coming, and thought his last hour had come, when something whizzed past his ear, and he saw the ferocious countenance of the Indian change its expression to one of agony. The feathered shaft of a broad arrow was seen protruding from his bronze breast. Twice the Navajo essayed to raise his weapon, but his strength was going, and Nick O'Con-

nor dropped his hand, for it was not in his nature to strike a man who had already received his death-wound.

The hatchet fell from the grasp of the savage; he clutched at the bloody cloth upon his bosom, and, with a wild cry of rage and defiance, the last of the wild band lay dead at the feet of the giant scout.

Who had killed the red brave? Turning his head quickly in the direction from which the arrow had come, Nick saw Kara leaning upon her strung bow, looking sadly at the dying man. It was her hand had saved the life of the brave scout!

"Well shot, Kara!" he cried. "It's little Nick O'Connor would have to say in life if the arrow had not been true. My life isn't worth much, but av ye plase I'd rather kape it a while longer. Thank ye, Kara."

"It is done now," said Kara, sadly. "The wife of Adanta is doubly outcast, for she has shed the blood of a Navajo and yonder warriors know it."

"Ha!" cried Nick. "I forgot the divils that wint back to the horses. Come on, Ned."

He darted away, closely followed by his friend, but the wounded men had taken the alarm and were already in the saddle, and, as they saw the Irishman advancing, whirling his club in the air, they urged their horses in rapid flight and disappeared down the pass.

"Now, Kara," said Dangerfield, as they came back, "where are your husband and his people?"

"Kara does not know. This place is no longer safe for the white men, for Adanta will not rest until he has your scalps. Fly while there is yet time."

"I don't like the notion av bein' druv out av my own place by a lot av painted haythens," grumbled Nick. "Let's stay, an' sure we can make the purtiest fight ye iver h'ard tell av. I niver thought to run away like a big thafe."

"It would be foolhardy to remain," said Dangerfield. "No; get your traps together and let us make a new camp. Doubtless you know many such in these mountains."

"A few," replied Nick. "Go an' look afther the thraps yonsilf. Sure there's three hunthred dollars' worth av hair on thim Injuns, an I'm the b'y to lift it. It's yersilf have the squeamish stomach about scalpin,' Ned."

"Do your heathenish work if you must," said Ned, with a look of disgust. "It is a horrible practice."

"What is sass for the goose is also sass fur the gander," said Nick. "Sure an' that purty hair av yours w'u'd be hangin' in a Navajo girthle this minnit av ye didn't fight like a divil. They take *our* hair, we take *theirs*. It's an even thing; I does be thinking."

"Come, Kara," said Ned, willing to spare her the sight, "let us look after the wounded man."

He was mistaken in Kara, however. She had been bred in the belief that to the victor belong the spoils, and would have considered Nick O'Connor a very foolish man if he had not taken the scalps of the fallen. Yet she followed Dangerfield obediently, and they reached the spot where the white man who had been pursued by the savages had fallen senseless to the earth.

He had recovered enough to raise himself on his elbow and watch the fight with keen interest, and now that it was over was engaged in stanching the blood which flowed from his wounded side. Occupied in this way he did not notice the approach of Ned Dangerfield until he was very close at hand, when he raised his head quickly and greeted him with a smile.

"Well done, sir; well and bravely done," he said. "I give you my word that I never saw a better Indian fight in my life, and there are few spots in the Indian country which my eyes have not rested on at one time or another. Ha! is not that woman Kara, the wife of the chief Adanta?"

"Yes; do you know her?"

"I know *all* Navajoes," replied the man, quietly. "They have done me a bitter wrong and I will never leave their trail until I have done my work."

"What is your work?"

"When I have killed a hundred Navajoes with my own hand, then only will I be content. But I am wasting time and we must get out of this. Help me to bandage this hurt, if you please.

The wound was in his side, and at a glance Dangerfield saw that it had been made by an arrow, which had glanced along the ribs, cutting a deep gash. It was the loss of blood

which had caused him to fall, for the wound in itself was not necessarily dangerous. Dangerfield having had much experience in wounds, quickly dressed the hurt and made the wounded man comfortable. This done, he rose, though somewhat unsteadily, and picked up the rifle which had fallen to the earth.

"What have you in that canteen?" he asked.

"Brandy," said Dangerfield. "Drink; it will do you good."

"I must have strength or I would not touch it," said the stranger. "Ah, the fiery liquor does go to the spot, after all. There, take it, and tell me what you think of me."

It was a strange question, and Dangerfield looked closely at his guest. In height there was little difference between them, but the frame of the wounded man was a mass of sinews and cords, and there was a cat-like grace in his movements which betrayed the possession of great activity as well as bodily strength. His face was browned by exposure, where it was not covered by his thick brown beard. His hair was of the same color, and his eyes, full of fire, beamed upon the face of Ned Dangerfield.

"You are a *man*," he said, quietly.

"So is that big scout, and I am no baby myself. We three together might make warm work for the Navajoes."

"We might."

"Now, let us understand each other. I know what you seek in these mountains. You look for the hidden treasure of the Navajoes—the valley in which they find their gold."

"How know you this?"

"Pshaw, can we waste time in telling? You seek riches; I seek revenge. Your quest will take you into the Navajo country—so will mine. As for the gold, if you find it take it, for the dross is nothing to me. There was a time, indeed, when I sought it, but the incentive to labor is gone from me forever, and now I am a lonely man, only seeking revenge upon that hated race, the Navajoes."

"What have they done to you?"

"Do you ask me that?" he cried, wildly. "They have robbed me of all that made life sweet—the noblest, bravest man, tender and loving women! I shall go mad if I think of it. What say you, are we friends?"

"If you will. Can you show us a safe place for a camp?"

"I have hunted these hills for six years, and ought to know. Why is this woman with you?"

"She has been cast out by her husband for attempting to aid in the escape of a white prisoner."

"She killed that red fiend bravely," said the stranger, "and I can forgive her Navajo blood for the act. She is not all Indian, though. Her mother was a Mexican girl, stolen from Chihuahua."

"You seem well posted."

"I have made the Navajoes my study for years," was the answer. "Hia! hear the Indian signals! It is time we were away."

Shortly after they rode away, Kara mounted upon one of the captured horses. Nick concealed his hideous trophies in his ample side-pockets, as he rode.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEAD SENTINELS.

THE scene of the late conflict was desolate. Nothing living remained—only the gory dead, stripped of the trophy of victory, the scalp-lock. The buzzards came down to the feast, the coyote came loping through the pass, and the obscene beasts and birds held high carnival.

Suddenly the wolves scattered, the buzzards rose up on heavy wings and soared away; the tramp of horses was heard within the glen, and a glittering band, in all the grand display of Indian finery, came down the narrow pass, their spear-heads and ornaments glittering in the sun. At their head rode Adanta, the warrior-chief of the Navajoes, and as his eyes rested upon that bloody battle field, even his natural stoicism was put to the test.

On that field, torn by wolf and buzzard, scalpless, gory, lay a favorite brother, a man whose place in the tribe was only

equaled by that of Adanta—known as a skillful warrior, and one who never went back in the face of danger.

"See!" he said. "The white dogs have done their work, and our brothers are dead. Speak, Nemoteka!" he cried, addressing one of the wounded men, who had escaped. "Who has done this?"

"Tall Pine was here," replied the man, "when the Navajoes took the trail of the white hunter, who was wounded by an arrow, and if Tall Pine had not stopped the way he would have fallen into our hands."

"There were others; Tall Pine alone could not beat twenty Navajo braves."

"Another young white warrior was with him, who fought bravely. They had short guns, and every one held many bullets. Only four braves were left to fight with the white warriors when they reached the plain. There was one more who fought, and whose arrow killed Nadara, the great brave. Shall I speak the name?"

"Let the warriors hear it."

"Nadara's hatchet was above the head of Tall Pine. A blow, and the great scout was dead, but an arrow pierced Nadara's breast, and he fell."

"An arrow! Who let the arrow fly? Speak before I strike you dead," cried Adanta.

"Kara loosed the shaft; Kara, the wife of Adanta!" replied the Navajo.

A perfect howl of agony and rage burst from the savage band, and Adanta dismounted and turned over the bodies until he came to the one who had fallen by Kara's arrow. The shaft was still protruding from his breast, and Adanta drew it out and looked earnestly upon it.

"Warriors and chiefs," he cried, in a ringing voice, "Nemoteka has spoken true words. This is the arrow of Kara, the Navajo Queen, the woman who has been my wife. See; I have cast her out forever. Henceforth, he who finds her shall bring her captive to the Navajo village if he can; if not, let her die the death she deserves. Adanta has spoken the doom of the woman whom he knows no more."

A murmur of assent passed among the warriors, for they recognized the justice of the doom he had decreed. From

this time it would not be well for Kara to meet a Navajo brave upon the mountain or plain, for her fate was sealed. At the orders of their chief a great trench was scooped up with knives, hatchets and hands in the side of the ravine, and the bodies of the slain laid to rest. Over them they built a rocky cairn, so firm that the coyote could not dig up the bodies. Having done this they rode away upon the track of the slayers. For some distance the trail was plain and then it suddenly ceased in a place where the bottom of the valley was literally floored with smooth, white rocks, so hard that they did not take any impression from the unshod hoofs of the horses.

From the sides of the pass, narrow gorges led up into the mountains, any one of which might have been taken by the fugitives. Adanta halted his men and sent one up each of the passes, with orders to give a signal cry if they found the trail.

Half an hour passed and the scouts came back from all the passes save one, and reported that they had seen nothing. Two more braves were sent up this remaining pass to find the missing scout, and ten minutes after a long, low, tremulous cry was borne on the wind to their waiting ears—the cry which they well understood.

They had found the scalped body of their friend.

The Navajoes sprung into the saddle as one man and rode up the pass for some distance, when they came upon the two braves last sent out, seated upon their horses at the foot of a great tree, looking down upon the dead form of the red scout. He had been slain by a blow from a hatchet, his scalp was gone, and his bare bosom bore a strange mark, evidently slashed with a knife, a six-pointed star. It was needless to tell the Navajoes what this meant, for hardly one among them but had seen one of the tribe dead upon the trail, with this strange mark upon his breast. It was made by drawing a triangle with the sharp point of the knife, and then a second triangle inverted. They knew the mark too well, the sign of the "Death Man of the Navajoes," for no other tribe was slain by his hands, or bore this dread mark.

"The Death Man is indeed in the mountains," said Adanta, without a change of countenance. "It is well; we have one

more death to avenge. Bury him, sons of the Navajoes, and then we will follow this trail to the end."

The work was soon done, for they laid him in a rocky cleft and piled the stones high above him, and went on their way again. The nature of the ground changed again, and descended into a soft bottom, through the midst of which ran a mountain stream, clear as crystal, flowing from east to west. At a glance Adanta saw in the bright sand at the bottom the marks of horses' feet going westward.

"Haa!" he cried; "the white dogs think to blind the eyes of a great chief. Let the warriors follow, and we shall soon hang their scalps upon a pole."

"And what will the great chief do with Kara, who is with them?" asked the next chief in command.

"Adanta does not know her. If there is a woman among them who has aimed an arrow at the breast of a great chief and has slain Nadara, the bravest of the brave, a bright fire shall be lighted for her in the Navajo village. Have I spoken well?"

The chief inclined his head and looked but ill pleased. He was an ambitious man, and hoped that Adanta's love for Kara might lead him to do something which would bring him into bad repute with the Navajoes, but the acute head chief knew better than that.

Their course led them through a rocky cañon, over a shining sand which was so hard that the horses' feet made little impression upon it, where the water was so shallow that it hardly rose above the fetlocks. The tracks of the horses were still plainly to be seen, and it was quite evident had not been long made, or the rapid stream would have obliterated them.

"Tall Pine has lost his cunning, or has become a fool," said Adanta, "or he would know that he can not go far by this stream. It is good; revenge is near at hand."

They pushed on rapidly, but the water did not deepen, although the channel was now somewhat obstructed by the boulders which had rolled down the mountain side. As they came on, the splashing of water could be heard, and they knew that some animals were struggling in the stream below.

"Ha!" cried Adanta. "Do you hear that, Navajoes? We have them; they can not escape!"

They pushed on rapidly, but, rounding the point of rocks, they found that the fugitives had already passed the next turn. The savages now pushed on eagerly, for they were wild to avenge their slaughtered friends, when, reaching the next turn, they saw just before them, huddled against the rocky wall, upon the brink of a mountain cascade, four riderless horses. At first they thought that the whites were crouching behind the horses, waiting for them to advance, but a moment's scrutiny convinced them of the delusion. The walls rose upon each side of the stream to the height of nearly a hundred feet, and it was impossible for even a mountain goat to climb them. Besides, there was no hiding-place in which they could have ensconced themselves, and Adanta saw that he was tricked.

The scouts, fearing that they might be hard pressed, had deserted the horses, turned their heads down-stream, and left them to pursue their own course, while they had taken another route on foot!

If their plan had been to gain time, they had certainly succeeded. Words are inadequate to paint the wild rage of Adanta, as he realized the trick, and after a few moments' search, to convince himself beyond a doubt that their enemies were not hidden near at hand, they turned back, and pushed their horses as much as possible to reach the spot where they had commenced to follow the false trail.

More than two hours had been lost when they recovered the trail, and it was now late in the afternoon. The whites had gone up a deep gully, close to the bank of the stream, where it would be impossible to follow them on horseback and for a moment Adanta hesitated. But his mind was soon made up. Selecting forty of his best men, he left the rest in charge of the horses, and ordered them to make for a gully which led into the main track to the Navajoe village, and to remain there until he returned. They rode away at once, leaving Adanta with his forty men, armed only with bows, hatchets and knives, upon the banks of the little stream.

"Brothers," said Adanta, "we have a great work before

us, and we must see to it that we do it well. Who is there among us so base that he will dare to return to the Navajoes and say: 'Nadara is dead; Menthako and Hando sleep without their scalps; many other brave warriors have lost their lives, and a hundred Navajoes were not enough to hunt down the murderers. Dare we do this?'

A dissent was made in the usual Indian fashion. All clashed their hatchets together, whirled their knives in the air, and vowed to follow the trail if it led them into a white settlement.

"It is good," said Adanta; "my brothers have spoken as becomes warriors. All of you have lost friends—I have lost a brother, and Tall Pine has his scalp. My brother's spirit can never rest until I have sent Tall Pine to carry a torch before him across the dark river."

They took the trail at once, Adanta leading. It led them into secret passes among the mountains, of which they had known nothing, showing that the white leader was a man who had long made his dwelling in that desolate place. Night came on and found them upon an elevated plateau, covered with a luxuriant growth of wild flowers, such as can only be found upon the elevated table lands of the South-west. There they camped down upon the trail, and, sending out three or four men into the sage-bush, which bordered the plateau, their arrows speedily brought down enough hare and wild birds to furnish the whole band with a meal. There was no thought of cookery, for they were not the men to betray their presence by building a fire. The game was eaten raw, and a small portion sufficed to satisfy the hunger of these abstemious men.

When the meal had been concluded, guards were set, and the rest lay down upon the soft verdure of the plateau, and were quickly asleep. The night crept slowly on; the stars came out in the clear sky, the moon arose in soft splendor and shed its mellow radiance on the scene; no sound disturbed the solitude save the deep breathing of the sleeping men, the distant bark of the coyote, or the hare stirring the sage-bush close at hand.

At the midnight hour, those appointed to relieve the guard arose and looked about them. The warriors they were to re-

have were not in sight, and they stole softly out to their posts. The men they sought were lying upon the soft grass, seemingly asleep, and they would not awake them although they knew that Andanta would kill any brave with his own hand who had been found sleeping on his post. Each man took his station and watched better than the others had done, and perhaps might have done so until morning had not one of the sentinels attempted to arouse his sleeping comrade. The man did not stir, and the other struck him sharply with his foot without eliciting any sign of awakening. Becoming angry at this conduct, he stooped and shook him roughly, when he became conscious that his hand was wet with something too thick and slimy for dew. Raising his hand in the moonlight, he saw that it was stained with gore.

His startled cry aroused the sleeping camp, and they crowded about him, each with his weapons ready, expecting nothing less than a night attack. Adanta was among the first to reach the side of the man who had given the alarm.

"Who calls?" he cried. "Why are the warriors called from their rest?"

The man did not speak, but held up his bloody hand before the eyes of the chief.

"Blood! Whose is it?"

The guard pointed to the man at his feet, and a dozen hands seized and dragged the sleeper more into the light. As the moon-rays fell full upon his exposed breast, every one started up and lifted his weapons, looking wildly about, as if he dreaded some sudden danger.

There was good cause. The man at their feet was dead, his scalp torn from his head, although he had no wound upon him which could have caused death. But the impress of iron fingers were on his throat, and upon his naked breast they saw the mark of the Death Man of the Navajoes.

The destroyer had been among them. Who was next to fall?

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MOUNTAIN.

ADANTA was a brave man, but these mysterious deaths for a moment unmanned him. Cries were heard from the other posts, and hurrying to the spot, they found two more gory bodies, with the same mark upon the gashed bosom. Who was this man, who came and went like a shadow, leaving a track of blood behind him? Why did he strike at the Navajoes and at none others?

"My brothers," said the chief, "we see plainly that the Mad Spirit follows us, and that only by constant watchfulness can we succeed. If our hearts are strong and our eyes open, we will carry the Death Man to the Navajo village and burn him at a slow fire."

"Fools!" cried a clear, sonorous voice. "The Mad Spirit was not born to be slain by a Navajo. Follow, ye who dare!"

A dozen warriors accepted the challenge, and grasping their weapons bounded away in the direction of the voice. They broke through the line of sage-bushes and searched everywhere but with ill success. Search where they would the Death Man was not to be seen, and of the twelve warriors who followed him, only eleven came back, and not one among the Navajoes doubted for a moment what his fate had been. When morning broke they found him lying upon the blood-stained grass, with the mark of the slayer upon his breast.

A strange terror fell upon the band. There was not a man among them who was not ready to face death in open battle, but this mysterious being and his bloody work, filled them with awe. They looked in each other's faces in dread, wondering whose turn would come next.

Adanta was the first to recover his presence of mind. That subtle warrior was as much in doubt as any, but he knew that it would not do to show his companions that he

feared; so he ordered them to find the trail and follow the man of whom they were in search. It still led up the mountain, higher and higher into the desolate passes, ending suddenly in a wild glen under a massive wall of rock, rising grandly above their heads.

Adanta stared about him in confusion and dismay. There was the trail which he had followed; where the man who had incurred his vengeance? He smote his hands fiercely together and ran up and down the narrow glen looking for the lost trail. He looked in vain, for the bare brown rocks did not give a sign.

"It is the work of the Mad Spirit," said one of the braves in a hollow whisper. "The sun god is angry with us because we would lay our hands upon one who has been touched by *his* finger."

"Silence!" cried the chief, fiercely. "Would you return to the villages of the Navajoes and say, 'We feared the hand of the Death Man, and turned back like cowards from the trail?' Are the Navajoes blind? Search for the trail; it must be near at hand."

A burst of mocking laughter was the only reply to this speech, coming from the rocky wall beside them. So close was it, that the savages bounded back as one man and grasped their weapons, expecting a shot, but, after the first laugh, not a sound was heard.

"The Mad Spirit is making sport of the Navajo warriors," said the warrior who had spoken before. "Let us turn back while there is time, before the lightning of the sun's wrath shall consume us."

Adanta snatched a hatchet from his belt and turned his flaming eyes upon the speaker. The warrior shrunk back, appalled, brave as he was, before the terrible gaze of the chief. For a moment his life hung in the balance, and but that he returned the gaze of the chief boldly, he would have been killed on the spot. But, the angry fit passed; the chief returned the hatchet to his belt and pointed toward the Navajo village.

"Go," he said. "You are not the son of Nadara; you are a woman. Go, and *dwell* with the women."

The warrior turned pale even through his paint, for no greater disgrace could have been heaped upon him than to

send him back to the village from the scene of wild adventure.

"No!" he cried, savagely. "You can not make the son of a chief a dog. I will not go."

"Wanantoo is the son of Nadara, after all," said the chief, with a smile. "Is he willing to meet death at my hand, or will he go back?"

"Strike!" cried Wanantoo, boldly. "I am ready to die, but I will not go back."

The chief again drew his hatchet and waved it before the eyes of the warrior, but his bold eyes did not quail, and he stood boldly inviting the blow.

"The hatchet is bright and keen," said Adanta. "If I strike, you are dead. Will you go back to the village and say that Adanta sent you to live with the women?"

"Let Adanta strike," was the reply. "I will not go back."

The chief hurriedly replaced the hatchet and put both hands upon the breast of the young warrior. His countenance had lost its fierce glare and an expression of the deepest joy showed itself in his eyes.

"It is good," he said. "Wanantoo is indeed the son of Nadara, and Adanta is proud to call him a friend. Is the heart strong, and will the warrior do the will of his chief?"

"Wanantoo is ready. If he would have turned back it was to save the life of Adanta, who is the prop upon which the Navajo nation leans."

"Look up, Adanta," cried a voice above them. "Look up, chiefs and warriors of the great tribe!"

All started as the clear, musical voice fell upon their ears, and obeyed the summons. Upon the great rock, a hundred feet above them, kneeling upon the verge and looking down at them, was Kara, the beautiful wife of Adanta. Her black hair floated back about her beautiful form, her eyes were flashing, and for a moment they stood spell-bound by the majesty of her presence.

"Hearken to me, Adanta; hear, chiefs and warriors! Why do you follow upon a trail which can only end in blood?"

"Look, Wanantoo!" cried Adanta, "this is the wicked

one who launched her arrow into the breast of Nadara, your father. Why should we listen to her wicked words? Up, and cast her down among us, that we may tear her limb from limb."

"Stop!" cried Kara. "Before you lift a hand against me, hear the words which I speak. A great woe is coming upon the great tribe, if ye turn not back upon the trail. The hand of the sun god has already been heavy upon you, and it will fall with greater weight unless you go away. Kara loves the great tribe still—she loves her husband and would not see him die. Turn back then, while the time is yours, and do not tempt your fate."

Wanantoo was already searching for some place where he could scale the rocks and reach the speaker, but the wall was nearly perpendicular; he could not find a footing anywhere, and he shook his clenched hand at the woman above him.

"Killer of brave men!" he cried, "wait until the hand of Nadara's son can reach you, and you die."

"Think not of vengeance, Wanantoo," said Kara, sadly. "Your father fell fighting, and it was well that he died."

In a fury at the impossibility of reaching the woman whom he hated, Wanantoo snatched his bow from his back and began to fit an arrow to the string.

"Beware!" she cried. "You are very near to death."

He persisted, and began to raise the bow toward the immovable figure upon the rock. The bright point of the arrow was glittering in the sun-rays, when a muffled report was heard within ten feet of the place where he stood. The bow dropped from his extended hand, the look of rage was fixed forever upon his face, and, throwing up both hands, he fell prostrate upon the rocks. His friends ran to lift him, and as they did so a dark stream of blood dropped out upon the stones.

He was shot through the heart and was dead. Even Adanta, bold as he was, fell back appalled at this mysterious death. From whence had it come? The sound which they had heard was hardly like the discharge of a rifle, and yet the wound in his breast was made by a bullet from a twisted bore. Kara had not moved, but was gazing down upon them in the same way, a sad look upon her face.

"I warned him," she said; "the next hand that takes a bow shall never draw bow-string again. Take my warning and depart."

There was not a man among them hardy enough to touch a weapon after this warning, but Adanta spoke.

"Woman of the bad heart!" he cried, "look upon your work. A brave man lies dead, who but for you would be living to fight for the great tribe. Woe to you when you fall into the hands of Adanta, and he will never rest until that work is done."

The warriors took up the body of the slain brave and carried it slowly down the pass. Adanta went last, and as he passed out of sight turned a look upon his wife, and saw her still kneeling upon the rocks, looking after him with unutterable love in her dark eyes.

A moment more and he was gone, and stood sullenly by while the warriors laid the body of Wanantoo in a crevice, and covered it up with loose stones.

This done, he gave them a sign to follow, and taking another path, began to climb toward the place where he had seen Kara, followed by all his braves.

The place where they stood when the summit was reached was the top of a mountain, four thousand feet above the level of the sea. About them, peak on peak, arose the grim sides of higher mountains, their tops piercing the clouds above, and the snow upon their summits gleaming white in the sun-rays.

The plateau upon which they now stood was perhaps half a mile across, piled with loose bowlders scattered in endless confusion, heap upon heap, as if thrown up by some mighty convulsion of nature. But the peak was bare; not a sign of a human being was anywhere in sight.

Where was Kara? Where the mysterious marksman who had shot down Wanantoo? They traversed the broad plateau from side to side, vainly seeking for some sign, but were at last forced to give up in despair.

"The spirit of the rocks has given help to Kara," said the chief, despondingly. "What shall be done, warriors of the Navajoes?"

The braves looked at each other in doubt and amazement.

Naturally superstitious, they felt that they were fighting shadows, but, warned by the fate of Wanantoo, none of them dared propose a retreat, although each man felt that it was an utter impossibility for them to succeed.

"Shall we turn back?" demanded the chief. "It is no disgrace to yield when the mountain spirits fight against us; and why should we leave our braves on the hills, slain by enemies we can not see?"

The warriors eagerly accepted the plan, and began to file slowly down the mountain side. As they passed along, Adanta struck with his foot a small stone which lay in the path, and it rolled aside, showing a dark opening in the earth below. Quick as thought he stooped and applied his ear to the aperture, and could hear the murmur of voices far below. Grasping the detached stone he quickly replaced it, while the warriors looked at him in surprise.

"Come about me," he said, in a low tone. "We are not beaten yet, for the men we seek are here in the heart of the mountain. Let us search for the mouth of the cave."

They scattered again over the broad plateau, and as before were unsuccessful in their search. Adanta thought of a new plan, and called in his men.

"We will go back to the Navajo village," he cried, in a loud voice. "Why should we longer fight with the spirits of the hills?"

The band trooped down the mountain-side, man by man, and disappeared in the narrow glens. When the sound of footsteps had died away, and silence reigned in the place, there came a grating sound, and a huge boulder, which lay upon the plateau, swung round a little, enough to admit the passage of a man's body. A moment more and Nick O'Connor appeared upon the plateau.

CHAPTER V.

A LIVING DEATH.

THE giant scout crept carefully to the verge of the rocks and looked over. Not an enemy was in sight and no sound was heard, and he began to think that the foe had indeed given up the battle and departed.

"Whoop!" said Nick, in a subdued tone. "Come out av that, ye divils; come out, I say! Be the big horn spoon, but we've fooled the thaives, afther all."

The others were now heard clambering up the sides of the opening, Dangerfield turning to assist Kara in the ascent. There were tears in her bright eyes as she appeared, and the volatile Irishman looked at her pityingly.

"Och, the devil fly away wid the man that w'u'd make such a purty craychure graive," he said. "Niver mind him, at all, at all, Kara; it's little luck or grace he'll have, or inny man that would be so mean as to thry to kill the likes av ye."

"Oh, shut up, Nick," said Ned Dangerfield. "You don't suppose that she understands your blarney, do you? What is the next move, Mr. —? By the way, we don't know what to call you."

"Call me Kit Burt," replied their new companion. "Any name will do for a man who has severed all earthly ties, and who has but one object in life. Call me Kit, and I will answer."

"Very well, then; what are we to do now?"

"I am not fully satisfied that Adanta is gone. I believe that he suspects the secret of our retreat, and is on the watch for us somewhere. What do you think, Kara?"

He repeated his opinion in the Indian tongue—which he spoke like a native—and she answered by a grave nod.

"Adanta is a wise chief; if he has made a vow to follow us to the end, he will keep it."

"You think that he is hiding somewhere then?"

"Adanta has eyes like the eagle. He hates my white bro-

thers and no longer loves poor Kara. He will never give up the work until we are dead—or he is in the grave.”

“Thin, be the powers, I wish I had pulled on him when I had him covered,” Nick broke in. “Sorra come til him an’ the likes av him, but he has the bad heart.”

“Keep quiet, Nick,” commanded Dangerfield. “There is no end to your blarney when you once get to work.”

“It’s yerself have kissed the blarney stone, masther Ned,” protested Nick. “That Navajo is a lopin’ vagabone, an’ it w’u’d do me heart good to put a ball in him.”

“Listen, Tall Pine,” said Kara, laying her hand upon his shoulder. “You have been a good friend to Kara, and she loves you. Be more her friend; promise not to kill my husband, except to save your own life or to save a friend.”

“I don’t like to promise, acushla.”

“Promise, or we are enemies,” she persisted.

“All right, me darlint! I promise not to hurt the murderin’ thafe, bad scran til him!”

“We are wasting time in idle talk,” said Kit Burt, angrily. “As for Adanta, he is mine, and no man has the right to kill him until I give the word. Stay where you are until I come back.”

He took up his rifle and hurried away upon the track of the Navajo band, the rifle on a trail. Half an hour passed, when he came back on a run, and bounded up the rocks toward them.

“Into the cave, for your lives!” he cried. “Adanta is here!”

He had scarcely spoken when the Indians, who had made a circuit and come up in the rear of the position, suddenly sprung up from behind the rocks, while another party, who had concealed themselves in one of the gullies, came clambering up over the path by which Kit Burt had come, and the little party found themselves hemmed in by a circle of savage faces. Foremost among them stood Adanta, a look of triumph on his face.

“Adanta is here!” he cried, in a boasting tone. “Who is there among the whites can outwit the great war-chief?”

“Shtand!” cried Nick O’Connor, leveling his rifle at the breast of the chief. “I’ve got ye covered; I niver miss, an’

let a man raise hand or fut among ye, an' the chafe dies. D'ye hear that, now?"

Few among the Navajoes understood the words of the speaker, but his actions were unmistakable. The flashing eyes, the threatening weapon, and the commanding voice could mean but one thing.

"Get down there!" exclaimed Nick, still keeping his eye fixed upon the chief. "Let Kara go first, the little darlint. We'll save her or die thryin' to do it."

Kara descended first, Ned Dangerfield next, but Kit Burt hesitated. He did not like to leave the gigantic scout alone. But, after a momentary hesitation, he went into the opening and laid his hand upon the small stone which propped the boulder in its place. Nick, still keeping his eye upon the chief, retreated step by step and dropped suddenly into the hole.

The eye and hand of Kit Burt were trained to act quickly, and in the twinkling of an eye the stone slid into its place while the patter of arrows upon its surface showed that they had not been a moment too soon.

There was a rough projection upon the lower side of the stone. About this a lariat had been wound tightly, and when held firmly below, no ordinary force could move the stone. Descending the opening quickly, clinging to the rope, they belayed the lariat about a projecting rock and breathed more freely. At least it would be some time before their enemies could force their way into the cave.

It was not a large one—a simple cavity in the rock forming a room some eighteen or twenty feet square, in which were some of the rude appliances of frontier life. It was one of the haunts of Kit Burt which he had reached by accident and had since utilized in the wild life he led.

"They know the way into this place," said Kit, "and I won't be long before they force the passage, but we can make it warm for any Indians who try to get down that narrow opening. Load your revolvers, gentlemen; we may need their aid, and I am not in my usual condition."

"We must hide the woman somewhere," said Ned Dangerfield. "They may take it into their heads to roll stones down here."

"That is true," said Kit, quietly. "Kara, come this way."

"Kara will stay," she said, proudly. "Her white brothers have been very kind to her and she will fight for them."

"You will only be in the way," replied Kit. "Three men will be amply sufficient to defend this place from our enemies. Come here and I will show you a hiding-place."

In one corner of the room was a narrow slit in the rocks, from which a strong current of air came up. This slit led downward for some distance and then seemed to terminate abruptly. As it inclined at an angle of forty-five degrees it was easy of descent, and Kara, after some objections, went into the cleft, which Kit Burt covered with a flat stone upon which he had been accustomed to broil his meat.

"The red devils are working at the stone," said Nick, as their new friend came back. "Sorra fall on their heads. May they be cursed from the crowns of their heads to the soles of their fate. Wirra, wirra, to think av three good men caught like rats in a trap!"

The Indians had made levers by bundling together five or six spears wrapped tightly with lariats. Inserting their extemporized levers in a narrow opening, they pried up the stone a little so that they could see the rope. A hand armed with a sharp knife now appeared and was instantly shattered by a ball from a pistol in the hands of Ned Dangerfield, who quickly slipped out the chamber and refilled it.

"That fellow is *hors de combat*," he said, quietly. "Who comes next?"

Taught by experience that it was not safe to thrust an arm into the aperture, Adanta fastened a knife upon a lance, and standing back out of range, severed the lariat by a single cut. The stone was now free and nothing remained except to roll it away from the opening and make the attack. But, even this was not safe to do in the face of such marksmen as those in the narrow chamber below. After some consultation, lariats were fastened to the rock, and by means of these it was dragged away from the aperture, leaving the passage clear.

What more were they to do now? Adanta was not the man to expose his braves needlessly, and he knew that the desperate men below would make the place a very mausoleum before they would allow themselves to be captured or slain.

The passage would not admit of the descent of more than three at a time, and was some forty feet in depth, with very little slant. Standing below, quite out of sight, the besieged men could receive them one by one, and kill them before they touched the floor of the room. They seemed no nearer the end than before.

"Why don't you come on?" cried Kit Burt, from below. "Dog of a Navajo, we are waiting for you. Come and meet the death you deserve at our hands."

Adanta answered by a shout of defiance, and ordered his men to bring up bowlders as large as they could lift and hurl them down the opening. The three defenders bounded to one side, as stone after stone came crashing down, striking the walls and floor of the cavity with terrible force.

"I expected this," said Ned Dangerfield; "but it will be impossible for them to come down while this rocky rain continues."

"They'll make a rush in a moment," replied Kit. "Flatten yourselves against the rocks, boys; I don't want any of you to get a broken leg out of this business. Look to your pistols; my weapons are here."

He touched a heavy hatchet and knife which hung in his belt, with a grim smile; but had hardly done so when another heavy body came down through the opening, and fell at length upon the floor.

It was an Indian, who had come too eagerly, for, before he could rise, the hatchet of Kit Burt fell, and the Indian lay motionless upon the rock. The Navajoes were now crowding rapidly into the opening, and the pistols began their terrible work. As fast as one was emptied, it was passed back to Kit Burt, who had the new chambers ready, and rapidly replaced the old ones. Man after man rolled down the inclined plane and fell motionless upon the floor of the cave. To miss was impossible; every bullet found a mark, and long before the second chambers were emptied, the chief ordered a retreat, for he realized the impossibility of forcing the passage in the face of such men as these. A moment more and none remained in the entrance save one or two who had fallen in such a way that the bodies could descend no further, and the gory forms of those who lay at their feet.

Adanta was at his wits' end. He had but little experience in fighting the Anglo-Saxon race, his battles having been with the Mexicans, whom it had been only sport to defeat. Out of his thirty-six men, six had been killed outright, and as many more were so badly wounded as to make them unfit for service. A glance at the faces of the rest told him that if he ordered them to descend into the cave again they would refuse, even at the risk of death at his hands.

"The dogs shall not escape," he said, "though the spears and arrows of the Navajoes are weak against the short gun which speaks many times. Let me speak to them, and then we will do our work."

He advanced as near as he dared to the mouth of the cave and spoke :

"The Navajoes want their dead. If we throw down the end of a lariat, will the white men fasten the dead to it, one at a time, and send them up?"

"And moighty glad to get rid av them," muttered Nick O'Connor. "Ye are welcome, honey; as welcome as the flowers av May."

Kit Bird answered the chief in the affirmative.

"And are the Navajoes safe while they do this work?" again demanded Adanta.

"Yes, chief," replied Kit Burt, speaking the Indian's language perfectly. "Send down the lariat."

The chief complied, and they dragged the first body out of the hole and a universal howl of rage burst from every lip as the dead Indian came up *scalped*. Nick O'Connor was not the man to lose his lawful prey. Only two bodies remained at last, those which lay in the passage, and none of the whites would come out to fasten the rope to them.

"Come and get them for yourself, Adanta," cried Kit Burt. "You shall not be harmed in doing it."

The chief at once stepped into the passage and sent up the two bodies.

"Wait a moment," said Kit Burt. "Let me give you a word of warning. You have been spared again and again because your wife begged us not to kill you, but we will not spare you much longer. You had better go away at once, and trouble us no more."

"We are going," said the Indian quietly, "but Adanta wants his wife."

"You drove her away of your own free will and we will not give her up to you."

"Adanta must have her," said the chief, in a tone of concentrated passion, smiting his hands together. "The Navajoes have much to thank her for. Listen, while I speak. There is a white girl among the Navajoes, a prisoner, whose face is fair as the lily and whose eyes are blue as the waters of the lake. Her hair is like the sunshine and her voice as the music of running water. Adanta will give her for Kara."

"A white girl?" cried Kit Burt, in a voice of agony. "Ha! Do you know me then, red villain?"

"Adanta never forgets," replied the chief, "and he always keeps his word. Let Kara be brought forth, and I promise on the word of a man who never lies to send the white girl to the fort in the Apache pass before a moon has passed."

"Why do you want Kara?"

"She is my wife," replied the chief, in the same guttural tone. "Let the white man get his own and I will get mine."

"You don't know the temptation, boys," said Kit Burt, in a thick tone. "Go out of the passage and wait, chief; we will give our answer soon."

The chief quietly withdrew and Kara came out of her place of concealment.

"I have heard the words of the white man," she said. "Kara knows that Adanta speaks the truth and that he has a white prisoner, fair as the lily. Tall Pine knows it, for he saw her with Adanta upon the mountain. Kara loved her and would have taken her back to her people, but the feet of the chief were swift in pursuit and we were overtaken. See; Kara will go back to her people and die by their hands, that the white girl may be happy."

"Thin may the devil fly away wid me av ye do," roared Nick O'Connor. "Phat d'ye take us for, anyway?"

"Nick is right," said the wild hunter, sadly; "right in every point. I would give ten years of my life to see this white prisoner, if only for a moment, to satisfy a doubt which

has come into my mind, but I fear it cannot be. Stand back, Kara; we will not give you up."

Kara remonstrated with them, eager to sacrifice herself for the sake of those whom she loved, but none of them would listen.

"Let the white men give their answer," cried Adanta, above.

"No!" cried Kit Burt. "We will not give up this noble woman to your vengeance."

"Then die in your folly," was the reply. "Work, sons of the Navajoes; seal them in a living grave!"

The Indians now began to roll great stones into the passage, some of which began to lodge, and in a moment the place was so full of great stones, wedged into the narrow space, that the savages could work without fear of the revolvers. The horrible truth became apparent to the besieged men. They were to be shut up in the cave and left to starve. They could hear the rocks rattling down the sides of the cavity and knew that the passage was rapidly closing up, while the triumphant shouts of the Indians came more faintly to their ears as the heap grew larger.

They looked in each other's faces for a moment in speechless horror. Ned Dangerfield was pale as death; the lip of the stout mountaineer trembled, and Kara fell upon her face, but Kit Burt stood erect, with his arms folded upon his breast. The last stone was thrown upon the heap; an indistinct shout of triumph came to their ears and then a great silence followed.

They were brave men and did not dread death more than others, but such a death as this, cramped in that narrow space in the heart of the mountain, without food, without water—the lingering, horrible fate beyond any torture of which they had ever dreamed!

"We are doomed," whispered Dangerfield. "What can save us now?"

"We are in God's hands," said Kit Burt. "Let us trust in Him."

And they sat down to await as calmly as they might their dreadful doom.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NAVAJO VILLAGE.

! PERHAPS no tribe of Indians are less understood than the Navajo nation, since they have been steadily opposed to the attempts of white men to encroach upon their lands. Their numbers have been variously stated at from ten to twenty thousand warriors, and there is no tribe upon the plains which can surpass them in bravery, or in the arts in which they are versed. Take a full-blooded Navajo, in his native costume, and he is a most warlike individual. The dress is gaudy, the arms, the best in use among the Indians, and his horsemanship perfect. The helmet-shaped cap, worn by most of the men, with the tuft of eagle-feathers set into the crown, gives this tribe a warlike appearance far beyond any thing else to be seen upon the plains.

The Navajo country is that stretch of fertile land lying between the San Juan and Little Colorado tributaries of the great river bearing the latter name. A beautiful stretch of country, diversified by rare mountain scenery and picturesque ruins, the remains of the stately buildings which stood there in the days of that grand people, the Aztecs of Mexico, who, in their journey from the North, built up strong edifices, the curious workmanship of which is the wonder of our time.

Upon the broad plains, between the mountain ranges, dwell the Navajoes, a pastoral people, who were warlike enough to be willing to repay the hated Mexicans for the injuries done them at various times. Unlike the Pueblos, their buildings are not of the solid material in use among that tribe, as they often migrate to other portions of their country, as the demand for water, that great requisite with a people who have vast herds of cattle and horses, may seem to require.

The Mexicans fear them greatly, for their boldness is beyond all parallel. Scarcely a year passes, unless a great force of armed braves, admirably mounted, sweep down upon

the exposed States to the north of the Mexican confederacy, bearing away great spoils and many prisoners. Their herds of cattle, horses, and sheep are augmented regularly by this course, and it may be said that the Mexicans sow that the savages may reap.

The nation has been traduced by those who covet their country, or have suffered at their hands. They have been universally regarded as a nation of land pirates, Arabs of the prairie, their hands against every man, and every man's hand against them. The Mexican is their hereditary enemy, and never loses an opportunity to wrong them. From the earliest period of their history the Spanish-Indian race have oppressed them, and they are hardly to be blamed if they retaliate, at times, upon their old oppressors.

Their language is not essentially different from that of the other New Mexican Indians—the Comanche, Apache, and kindred tribes, but they have made advances in the arts beyond that possessed by most of their kindred. They manufacture to a considerable extent, and the gay blankets they make are much prized, and bring a high price in the markets of Santa Fé and El Paso.

They are not dependent upon other races for their garments, as the same looms which manufacture these blankets produce an excellent cloth, from which clothing is made, hence, they are better dressed than most of the prairie tribes, except, perhaps, the Pueblos and Moquis.

With this prelude, in order to understand these strange people, the scene shifts to one of the low mountain ranges, about fifteen miles from the great Cañon de Chellé. In a sheltered valley, between the ranges, a band of Navajoes had built up a village. It must be understood that there are rich men among the savages, who count their herds by thousands. Such men gather about them a large force of dependents, who follow their fortunes in peace or war. These chiefs are independent, but in times of war, join their forces against the common enemy.

The village to which we now draw attention, contained, perhaps, four hundred lodges. These were rudely built, as the wandering life of the tribe precludes the possibility of making more finished structures. Poles are set up at the

corners; others are laid across to support a covering, and the sides filled up with stone or wood, piled up roughly but firmly, and forming rude huts, suited to the primitive tastes of this people. As in most Mexican-Indian villages, the center of the village was a plaza or square, in which most of the ceremonies of the tribe were performed.

Crowds of gayly-dressed women occupied the plaza, chatting together very much as civilized women might have done. Their features are regular, and there is a vivacity and spirit in all their actions peculiar to the race. Some men were sauntering about, but most of them were in the fields herding the great droves of animals which belong to the village.

Suddenly, far away in the distance, is heard the sound of a horn, borne upon the passing breeze. Every voice is instantly hushed, for they are familiar with the sound of that horn, and know that the great chief of the village, and elected "war-chief" of the tribe, the highest office among this simple people, is returning from the plains. A half-hour passed, and over the ridges to the left glittering spears are seen, and in a moment more the band of Adanta appears, riding slowly toward the village. Something in their manner shows that every thing is not right. When did Adanta come back from the trail without driving before him a drove of horses and mules captured from the Mexicans? But now it seemed like a funeral procession. Not a sound is heard—not a shout is raised, and the warriors hang their heads as if in shame.

A silence fell upon the village and all gazed in awe as the band rode into the plaza, and each man set up his spear and shield at the door of his dwelling. Then for the first time they realized how thin the ranks were and how many had fallen in the desperate combats of the last few days. The women crowded about the warriors, eager to hear what had been done with their friends, but Adanta lifted his hand for silence, and then spoke:

"Hear, ye wives of the Navajoes; hear all who had friends and brothers in this band. If those friends, brothers, husbands, lovers, are not with us, you will see their faces no more. I can not speak; my heart is very full."

A low, mournful wail was heard rising from the crowd of

women, which rose and swelled with a solemn sound upon the summer air. Adanta again raised his hand.

"Let me tell you who is to blame for all this. Children of the Navajoes, Kara, the bad woman who crept into the heart of Adanta and had a warm place there, has done this wickedness. She alone is to blame."

"Aha!" screamed a toothless hag, as the chief spoke. "Kara, the beautiful; Kara, the queen of the village, who laughed at old age and trod upon the necks of the poor. Where is she, that we may tear her limb from limb."

"Kara is not with us," replied Adanta. "She has found friends to fight for her, who hid in the heart of the mountain, where many of our braves were slain. We filled up the door by which they entered and left them there to starve."

Cries of delight burst from the women who had lost friends, but there were some sad faces among the younger women of the tribe, with whom Kara was a favorite.

"Gan-o-tee," said the chief, addressing a white-haired man who stood near, "Adanta has no longer a wife. There is no one to keep the lodge-fire bright in his dwelling. See; my hand is open, and in it I hold a hundred horses and a hundred sheep such as you may choose. Take them, and send to the lodge of Adanta, Marah, the daughter you love. Is Gan-o-tee content?"

"Gan-o-tee is satisfied," replied the old man. "It is not good that the fire should go out upon the hearth of Adanta. The daughter of his heart shall go into his lodge and keep the fire bright."

The women of the tribe are regarded as the property of their parents until they marry, and a consideration is always paid, usually from five to ten horses. The worth of the old warrior's daughter must be rated by the price paid by the chief.

He turned on his heel and entered the lodge, which was larger and better furnished than most of the others. An Indian woman somewhat advanced in years, the mother of Adanta, was seated upon a pile of skins in one corner, playing with a handsome boy perhaps two years old, who looked up laughing and crowing as the chief entered. The stern

face relaxed at the sight of the boy, and with such a look as Hector might have worn when he caressed the son of Andromache, he took the laughing boy in his arms and caressed him.

"Has the boy been brave?" he asked of the woman. "Has he wept for the bad woman who fled from him?"

His mother nodded gravely.

"Let him forget her then, for he will never see her face again. Kara is dead.

The woman looked up, with a start of surprise and something of pain. As much as her Indian nature would permit, she had loved the wife of her son.

"Her name is never to be spoken," said the chief, sternly. "Another will take her place in my lodge and be a mother to my boy."

"Where is the White Sunbeam?" said his mother. "Remember the prophecy, if she escapes."

"The white prisoner is here," replied the chief. "Take the boy; I must go and see that she is safe."

He put the boy down upon the skins, and, hurrying out, entered a lodge which stood on the other side of the plaza. It contained three persons, the beautiful white girl who had accompanied Kara in her attempt to escape, the warrior to whose care she had been given, and the old hag who had exclaimed against Kara in the plaza. The latter was standing before the white girl with folded arms, wagging her head from side to side in the manner peculiar to Indian women when under strong excitement.

"Ha, white slave!" she screamed. "Your friend is dead—Kara—who fled with you from the Navajo village. I would have drank her blood—I would have burned her in the blaze. You must die too; aha!"

Adanta touched the old woman on the shoulder, and after a glance at his face she assumed an expression of extreme humility, for she saw that the chief was angry. He did not speak a word, but pointed to the door, and she went out of it as if shot from a strong bow and was heard to stamp and scream outside.

"White Sunbeam," said Adanta, addressing the girl by the poetical name which had been given her by Kara, "why

did you fly from the lodges of the Navajoes? Have they not been kind to you?

"My people are not your people, chief of the Navajoes," she replied. "I have no love for them in my heart. What is this that they tell me; is Kara dead?"

The chief nodded.

"Then listen to my words, chief. You know well that I have power of prophecy, and I warn you that for this cruel deed many Navajoes shall bite the dust."

"Ha! keep silent."

"I will *not* keep silent. A woman pure and stainless as snow—a woman of noble heart, the only one among your wild people whom I could love, has been basely murdered. Away; your doom is not far distant."

"Sunbeam," said the chief, "I did not kill Kara."

"Tell me how it was, and let me judge."

He narrated in as few words as possible the events about the cave, after she had been sent away.

"They were brave men," said the White Sunbeam, "and something tells me that you have labored in vain. The men you could not conquer by force you walled up in a living tomb. Go; you are a coward and will meet a coward's death."

"Ha!" cried the chief, his nostrils expanding. "Who dares call Adanta a coward? Beware, white girl! There is a stake in the plaza, and many hands ready to light the fire."

"But you dare not light it," cried Sunbeam, boldly, "for you know that the prophet has said that on the day when I leave you, a great evil shall fall upon the Navajoes."

"Sunbeam speaks truly," replied the chief, "but let her take care or Adanta will dare the danger and give her up to the flames. But come; you will go back to your place."

"I do not wish to return to it; neither can I endure your worse than foolish mummeries."

"Come!" was the only reply. "Why will Sunbeam be a fool? If Kara is dead *you* are to blame, for if you had not tempted her she would still be a faithful wife to Adanta."

Sunbeam allowed her head to drop upon her bosom. She could not deny that the wish to set her free had brought Kara to her death. Without a word she followed the chief, and together they went up the mountain gorge behind the

village. After a toilsome walk of half an hour's duration, they reached the summit, and there, upon a grand plateau, rose one of those vast structures which the Aztecs had left behind them.

It was a vast pile, covering an acre of ground, of a type of masonry forgotten, and beyond the power of modern architects. Built in the form of a square, the gigantic walls stood as firmly as in those long passed centuries when the last stone was laid by the Aztec workmen. Adanta stopped and regarded the grand edifice with a look of pride.

"This was the work of my fathers," he said, in a lofty tone. "Can the white men do as well?"

"It is grand, I grant you," replied Sunbeam, "but, why do you boast of it? Can the Navajoes build as their fathers builded? Are they able to rear such a pile as this?"

"If the Navajoes have forgotten the ancient arts of their fathers, it is because the Mexicans have oppressed them," replied Adanta. "Let us enter."

They passed through a great arched doorway and stood in the square, within the building. The place seemed deserted, and their very footsteps awoke strange echoes among the sounding aisles. The walls were covered with strange hieroglyphics and pictures of beasts, birds and fishes, but, above all, flamed a representation of a flaming sun. Adanta fell upon his knees before this, and touched the earth thrice with his forehead. At the same moment a small door in the wall opened, and a venerable man, with white hair flowing to his waist, dressed in a white robe, marked with strange symbols, stepped out into the open space.

"Adanta has come," he said, in a hollow voice. "What does the war-chief seek in the temple of the sun?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE INVOCATION.

"ADANTA would look into the future," replied the chief "He would know if the sun-god shines still upon his children, the Navajoes."

"Adanta is a bold man," said the old man, "but it requires double bravery to question the sun-god in his temple. It is well for the chief that he has brought back the white Sunbeam, for, without her, the future of the tribe would be dark, and the face of the sun clouded. Does Adanta still ask to speak with him?"

"Yes," replied Adanta, in an impatient tone, "I *must* speak with the sun-god."

The priest of the sun silently led the way, and they entered the little door in the wall, from which he had come, which closed silently behind them, leaving them in darkness. The moment they were alone, a strange, hollow sound was heard, like chords of music struck by spirit hands. They passed through a lofty hall, and at the end, the priest stooped and lifted a slab of marble, which formed part of the floor, revealing a square opening with a flight of steps leading downward. Sunbeam descended first, and was followed by Adanta, while the priest came last, replacing the stone after him.

They now stood in a great vaulted room, the walls and ceiling of which were literally covered with the same figures emblazoned upon the outer walls, and in the center, high above their heads, glowed the representation of the blazing sun. And, not that alone, for, there, standing in the center of the great room, supporting himself upon a mighty spear, stood the marble figure of the giant idol—a grand figure fifteen feet in height, the marble drapery formed to represent the costume of an Aztec prince of the old times. The left hand held three darts; the right rested upon a broken spear, and one foot was planted upon a prostrate figure a symbol of terrible power.

Adanta prostrated himself before this gigantic form, and uttered low prayers after his fashion. The priest bent his head but said not a word. When Adanta had finished his devotions, he arose, and the priest again turned to him.

"You still demand the invocation?" cried the priest. "Speak."

"I still demand it," replied the chief, in the same firm tone.

"It is well," said the priest. "Sunbeam, do your work."

The girl brought a brazier from behind a column, in which a fire was glowing, the fire which never was allowed to go down. She brought out more fuel of a peculiar kind, and added it to the pile, and in a moment a bright blaze sprung up, lighting the face of the god. The priest now produced a black blanket, with which he shrouded the chief from head to foot, for it was a tradition in the tribe, that no man could look upon the sun god during an invocation and live.

"Begin!" said the chief, addressing Sunbeam. "Speak, while I go away to pray to the sun-god alone."

He disappeared through one of the vaulted passages, leaving Sunbeam standing between the altar and the shrouded chief, who was as immovable as the grand statue before which he stood. A strange smile was upon the face of Sunbeam, as she took up a long, white wand and waved it over the burning brazier. As she moved it, the music they had heard before again began to sound, and the fire in the blazing brazier sprung up toward the ceiling, while the girl broke into a solemn chant, eulogizing the god, and calling him to appear.

A terrible crash was heard in answer to the summons. The brazier was lifted from the floor, rocked to and fro, and seemed about to fall but that Sunbeam caught it. At the same moment a trembling was visible in the great statue, and then a deep, hollow voice seemed to fill the vault from side to side.

"Who speaks?" it demanded. "Who dares to seek the sun-god in his holy temple?"

"Adanta is here," cried the chief, boldly. "Adanta, the war-chief of the Navajoes. He would know what the fates have in store for the great nation."

"The face of the sun-god is dark toward the Navajoes," replied the voice. "What has Adanta done? Why has he slain Kara, the priestess of the sun?"

"Kara was false to the Navajoes," replied the chief, tremblingly. "Her arrow has slain a great brave, and she has joined with the white men in doing wrong to the Navajoes. It is just that she should die."

"A priestess of the sun should be judged in the temple of the sun," replied the voice, which seemed to issue from the lips of the great statue. "Adanta has done a foolish thing, and the sun-god is angry. What more would Adanta ask?"

"He would know whether this white destroyer of the Navajoes, the Death Man, is doomed to fall by his hand?"

"The Death Man is terrible," replied the voice. "While he lives, the sun-god will not look so kindly upon the Navajoes; he must die."

"Adanta hears," replied the chief, in the same firm tones. "The Death Man is terrible, but a war-chief has a great name. He will follow upon the track of the Death Man, and never leave it until the work is done, and the body of his enemy laid at thy feet."

"My son," said the voice from the statue, "you have spoken well, and when the Death Man lies at my feet, the sun will shine again upon the Navajoes. Fall upon your face and pray."

"Adanta would ask one thing more. Will the son of Adanta live to be a man?"

"A cloud hangs over him, which only my hand can avert. Serve me faithfully and it shall be good with the son of Adanta."

Another loud crash was heard, and Adanta fell upon his face. The statue trembled again, and Sunbeam disappeared. Adanta did not attempt to rise until a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and the voice of the priest bade him stand, and the blanket was removed.

"My son," he said, "has the sun-god spoken to you?"

"He has spoken," replied Adanta, "and has given the chief a great work to do. The Death Man of the Navajoes must be brought and laid at the feet of the sun-god before he will be satisfied. I go to do my work."

He passed out through the vaulted passage, attended by the priest and Sunbeam. The moment the door closed behind him the white girl broke into a mellow laugh.

"Silence!" cried the priest, speaking English plainly. "Why do you laugh?"

"The mask may as well be off when we are together, my friend," said Sunbeam. "Between you and I, you are an impostor of the deepest dye. I am another, but my motive is good, while yours, I think, is not."

"Hush, I say! If these men knew that I had deceived them, my life would pay the forfeit."

"Let me put your life before you in its true colors, Narranissi. You are a half-breed, and have spent most of your life in the white settlements. You were hard-pressed for bread, even; but you are of the old priestly line, and when the acting priest died, you claimed the place as your right. The old mummeries of the dead priest did not suit you. Living so much among the whites, you must have something better, and I must own that you have done it well."

"Why repeat it?" said the priest, impatiently. "You must own that you are well treated here."

"I desire to return to my own people," she cried, angrily. "Why was I brought back? Why did you not have a different revelation, permitting me to go?"

"That is useless, Sunbeam," he said. "I could do nothing without your help, and it was for that I uttered the prophecy. Why should you go away? All your friends were killed with the caravan, and—"

"Yes, all, all: my dear father, my little brothers, the brave man who was to have been my husband—as there is a heaven above us, there are times, as Adanta stands before me, looking at me with his cold, cruel face, when I am tempted to kill him."

"You take it too hard, Sunbeam," replied the hypocritical priest. "Stay where you are for the present. Your attempt to escape has been the death of Kara, the best woman in the tribe. I find it hard to forgive him that."

"You loved her, priest," said Sunbeam, looking at him quickly.

"Hush; you must not speak of that. The poor girl is

dead, and I have set Adanta upon the track of one who will be very likely to set the mark upon his breast. I shall not mourn him very much, for he is too acute to be easily duped. Let us go back to our rooms."

They passed down through the great building and reached a place at the southern angle, where some small rooms had been fitted up for their use. Two young Indian girls were in the first they entered, preparing food. Passing them without a word, the two entered a room which was furnished after the Indian manner of civilized life. The articles it contained, doubtless plundered from some passing caravan, were sadly out of place there, and Sunbeam seated herself upon a sort of sofa, cushioned with jaguar skins, looking much fatigued.

"I want you to go to the village for me," she said. "I must know if there is any more news of Kara. I can hardly believe that her husband would kill her."

"Bah! I tell you that she is dead, and he shall repent it. It is getting dark; why should I go to the village?"

"When I tell you to do any thing I prefer to have it done at once," she said.

"Don't ask too much of me, Sunbeam," he said, with glittering eyes, "or I may have a revelation that you had better be burned."

"If you do, I also shall have a revelation to make. I will show the chief the speaking tube under the robes of the sun-god. What do you say to that?"

"We must remain friends," said the old hypocrite, sullenly. "Why not send one of the girls to the village?"

"Just as you like; send Morena, then."

He left the room and shortly after returned to say that the girl had received her instructions and departed.

"It is getting dark," he continued, "and we are going to have a storm. Shall we have supper? I am getting hungry after all this prophesying."

"Just as you like, sir," she answered, in a tone of contempt. "Tell Wa-ta to bring it in."

A table was drawn out and the remaining Indian girl brought in the dishes which had been prepared. When this was done the priest turned her out of the room, dropped a bar before the door, and produced from a cavity in the wall

a black bottle that contained something which smelled suspiciously like whiskey. He had a little horn cup which he filled and offered to Sunbeam.

"Pah!" she cried, putting it aside, "why do you offer the stuff to me?"

"You are foolish," he said. "I learned to love it among the whites, and I have not forgotten my first love. It makes me laugh sometimes to think how the face of Adanta would look if he saw me now."

"He would kill you where you sit," said Sunbeam, helping herself to some of the venison, "and sometimes I think that the world would be well rid of you."

"Don't be hard upon me," he whimpered. "The whites made me what I am, and it will go hard but I shall profit by the instructions I have received."

She said no more, but ate in silence, while he stopped often to drink from the bottle, growing more excited as the time went on, and the fiery liquor poured down his throat. The isolated life led by this strange man made this one indulgence second nature to him, but he could yet control his desires for drink sufficiently to refrain from it when there was any likelihood of a visit from any of the chiefs. Indeed, if they had surprised him when under the influence of the liquor, it is probable that they would have regarded it merely as the effect of inspiration—communion with the invisible spirits worshiped by them.

"The storm howls without," cried the mad priest. "No one will come to the temple and I will drink till the earth rocks. Ha! ha! ha! 'tis a fine thing to be priest of the sun, and rule a great tribe by prophecy! What a life it is, and how I love it! Why do you not drink, Sunbeam? You do not know what happiness is."

"I am not a fool, sir priest," said Sunbeam, haughtily. "You are getting too deep in your cups and I will leave you."

"Leave me? Why should the sun priestess fear the priest? Why should you go away and leave me to drink alone? Come; forget that you have been wronged in the draught I offer you."

She pushed the cup almost rudely aside and arose. He

made a deprecating gesture, but she passed him and entered a little room which opened into the one where they had been sitting, and he heard a bar drop into the socket. The half-breed looked after her with tipsy gravity. The intercourse which he had had with the whites had demoralized the man, and he had lost a great portion of the dignity which is the noblest attribute of the pure Indian.

"This is wrong," he muttered, "very wrong. A priest of the sun should not be drunk alone. It is shameful, very shameful, to be drunk without company. "Haa! I'll go down into the temple and get drunk with the sun-god. He can't drink, but he can keep me company."

Such an idea would never have entered the head of any except a very drunken man. He arose, supporting himself by the table, and looking unsteadily about him.

"Never got drunk with a sun-god in all m' life," he muttered. "Wish I had some of the Trapper Band here; how the temple would ring."

It was noticeable that, when this man appeared in his true character, he had very little of the Indian about him. For ten years before taking his place as priest he had been a member of a band of prairie men, and had adopted their peculiar code of morality as well as their form of speech. It was only in moments like this that he appeared in his true colors. Hugging the bottle under his robe he opened the door and staggered slowly down the lofty passage, pushed aside the stone and entered the great vault, pulling the stone carefully into its place.

"Glad to see you," he said, nodding cheerfully to the statue, and bringing forward the brazier so that its light fell upon its face. "Pretty much drunk, I am. That's cheerful; that's nice; now you and I will drink some fire-water."

He put the bottle to his lips and drank. As he did so he uttered a yell of terror and the bottle dropped from his hand, for there, in the bluish light shed by the brazier, he saw the face of Kara, the dead Queen of the Navajoes, staring wildly at him.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO SPECTRES.

ADANTA had returned to the village very ill at ease. To tell the truth he did not like the task which had been given him by the priest, yet he was not the man to refuse to perform any duty put upon him. He feared the "Death Man" as he feared no other being upon earth, and knew that to put him down would be a work of difficulty far beyond any thing he had as yet accomplished.

He pushed open the curtain of his lodge and entered. His mother was seated upon the skins, crooning out an Indian melody to the boy, who seemed to be uneasy, as from time to time he sobbed in his sleep.

"What is the matter with the boy, my mother?" the chief demanded.

"If I speak the truth, Adanta will be angry," she said.

He understood her at once. The little fellow was grieving for his lost mother and would not be comforted. A shade of anger crossed the noble face of the warrior.

"Can not the mother of a chief make him forget one who has been false and wicked?" he asked.

"Could Adanta have forgotten his mother when he was a little child?" she replied.

The chief nodded gravely, and taking a seat upon another pile of skins, lighted a long pipe and began to smoke. Soon after the storm broke in all its fury; the very walls of the cabin seemed to rock, yet he sat there apparently unconscious of the tumult without, smoking calmly, and looking at the boy in the arms of his mother. His dark eyes had a tender light in them, for the Indian father loves his offspring, especially if a boy, far better than civilized men are willing to allow. An hour passed and the boy had sobbed himself to sleep, and the chief put aside his pipe and lay down to rest.

The night passed on, the storm still raged, when suddenly a shrill shriek pierced the ear of night, and rose high above

the tumult. There was wild commotion in the camp, the trampling of feet, and up sprung Adanta, grasped his hatchet and knife and rushed out.

He found many people in the plaza, staring wildly about them, each one at a loss how to account for that which had aroused them from slumber. They had heard a cry for help, but could not tell whence it came.

"Let search be made," cried the chief. "Leave not a spot undisturbed."

The men scattered through the village, and ten minutes later a mournful cry announced the success of their search. Four men came into the plaza, bearing between them the body of a man, whose arms hung limp and powerless by his sides, as they walked.

They laid him down, and as they held up their torches, cries of horror were heard on every hand.

"The Death Man is here!"

The cry was passed from man to man in a hoarse, strained whisper, full of horror and fear.

The Death Man was indeed in the village, for upon the breast of the savage who had fallen was his mark, and the head had lost its scalp. Adanta alone was undaunted.

"Look, sons of the Navajoes," he cried. "Why are your faces dark, and why do you look at one another in fear? Has the time come when the braves of my tribe are afraid of one man? If that is so, let us go to the *Moquis*, those men of peace, who dare not strike for their own, and ask them to let us be their servants."

The *Moquis* are regarded by the prairie Indians as the type of all that is base and cowardly, because their peculiar religion forbids them to shed blood.

"Shall I say to the *Moquis*—'Here are we, children of the Navajoes; a single white man is on our track, and we fear him; so give us shelter and protect us from him, for he scares us very much?'"

No man knew better than Adanta how to arouse the passions of his hearers, and his peculiar style of oratory went home to their hearts. He saw that he had succeeded, in the clenched hands and long-drawn breath of his hearers.

"Listen, my children," he cried. "To-night I swore to

the sun-god of the Navajoes that I would not turn back from the work of following the Death Man until I had brought his body and laid it at the feet of the angry god. I have sworn this—I, Adanta, war-chief of the great Navajo nation, and Adanta never lies. Will you follow me? Are your hearts strong?"

Cries of rage arose upon every hand at their unknown enemy. Men ran hither and thither with torches, searching for some trace of him, but they looked in vain, for among the many moccasin-tracks impressed upon the soft earth it was impossible to pick out those of the Death Man. At last they gave up the search for the night, but guards were set about the village, a thing which had not been considered necessary for years.

Adanta retired to his lodge, his bosom torn by contending passions. Lying down again upon his couch of skins, and worn out by the labors of the past few days, he was soon fast asleep.

At this moment a hand pushed the lodge door open, and in the next, Nick O'Connor stole softly in. Close behind him came a slight boyish figure, clad in the hunting-dress of the border, and the two stood silently regarding the sleeping man.

Nick touched the knife in his belt significantly, and made a signal to strike the sleeping man, but the slight scout clasped his arm and pulled him back. He dared not speak, but his actions showed that he wished to arouse the chief and fight it out with him in the shelter of the lodge; but his companion refused to permit this.

Nick was in agony. The chief might awaken any moment, and if he did, it would be next to impossible for them to escape. He made furious gestures, but as before, was stopped by his companion, who crept cautiously to the pile of skins, and looked at the babe lying by the Indian woman's side. Stooping with a care which a woman might have envied, the small scout picked up the child, and signed to Nick O'Connor to leave the cabin. He shook his head, and pointed to the sleeping figure of the chief, and again touched his knife.

A look of anger came into the face of the boy who

carried the child, and he made an impatient gesture. The child cried out, and the chief started up from the cushions only to fall again under a tremendous blow from the ponderous fist of Nick O'Connor.

"Give me the chicken," he cried, drawing a hatchet from his belt, and taking the child upon his left arm. "Now, thin, folly me, an' may the divil take the hindmost."

They darted from the cabin together, into the night and storm. The mother of Adanta had awakened, and was screaming with the utmost power of her lungs, and the Indians were rushing toward the lodge from all points. Nick turned aside, and crouched for a moment under the shadow of an empty lodge.

"Have ye the hatchet ready?" he whispered. "Kape well behind me, an' it's meself will go troo thim. Hist! kape silent fur the life av ye."

Half a dozen Indians darted by, going toward Adanta's cabin. Nick knew that there was no safety for him in his present position; so rising, he darted down one of the narrow streets between the cabins, closely followed by his companion. All might have been well, but that two Indians darted out of a cabin provided with torches, and met them face to face. Nick uttered a wild Irish howl, and the foremost went down under the blow of his hatchet, while the second dodged his blow and set up a wild yell which quickly brought a dozen torches toward them.

"Come up til me, my bucko!" roared Nick, charging two or three skulking vagabonds, who beset his path. "Whoop, aroo! L'ave the way!"

They melted from his path like snow, only to hem him in again, evidently intending to keep him in play until more torches and help should arrive. He turned suddenly, shot one of his assailants against the wall of a cabin by a vicious kick, which nearly drove the breath from his body, and then darted down one of the narrow streets, turned a corner suddenly, and came out ahead of his enemies, and with a wild shout disappeared in the gloom. In the hurry of the fight he had not forgotten to keep the child sheltered, but he had forgotten his companion, and for the first time realized that he was alone. He turned back at once.

"Escape!" cried a voice in his ear. "You have got the child; make terms for her safety with that."

"You here, Kit?" whispered the big hunter. "I don't like to have her a prisoner."

"Adanta will give you any thing for the boy, even his revenge."

They darted away together, for the pursuers were close at hand. But the two men they pursued ran with the speed of flying deer, and speedily lost themselves in the darkness, and the Indians turned back, gloomy and disappointed, to find that they had one prisoner in their hands—the small hunter, who had stolen the child. They dragged him back through the mud and filth, to the plaza where the warriors were already gathering, and a shout of delight was heard as the approach of the prisoner was seen.

"Who is this?" cried Adanta, coming forward, wiping the blood from his face. "Where is Tall Pine?"

"Tall Pine has escaped," replied one of the warriors, "but we have taken this prisoner."

"Child-stealer!" cried the chief, fiercely. "Who are you, to steal into the lodge of Adanta, and rob him of his boy?"

"One who has the right to the boy!" replied the prisoner, raising his head. A cry of horror was heard as the face was raised, for all thought they saw a vision. Kara stood there—Kara, whom they had seen buried in a living tomb, in the depths of the mountains, about the Cañon de Chelló!

"Back!" cried Adanta, making a gesture of repulsion. "I did not slay you."

"You did what you could," replied Kara. "You left the woman you had loved, and whose child had lain in your bosom, to die of hunger and thirst, in the deep cave. But, the Manitou of the white man watched over us, and we are saved."

After the first shock Adanta began to realize the fact that Kara was there in the body, and a murmur crept through the crowd of witnesses.

"Let her die, false wife and mother. Her hands are red with the blood of Navajoes. Give her to the buzzards, the woman of the bad heart."

These and various cries of like tenor were heard upon every

side, and it was evident that the tribe would demand her death ; but Adanta waved them back.

"Do you tell me—"

"I tell you nothing," replied Kara. "If I have come into your hands it was my fault, for Tall Pine might have slain you this night, and would have done it but that I stopped his hand. Go ; you have lost the honor of a Navajo chief. Seek for honor among the Moquis !"

He raised his hand and struck her in the face with the open palm. At that indignity her bosom swelled, and she strained at her bonds so fiercely that for a moment they seemed about to part.

"Silence, wicked woman !" he cried. "Dare you insult a chief when the altar is awaiting the sacrifice ? Bind her well, warriors, and let six braves watch her, with arrows ready. When morning comes we will light up the pile of death."

Kara looked him fixedly in the face. The blow which he had given her had aroused the old Spanish blood, and driven all love for the chief forever from her heart. She stood like a statue, steadily regarding him, not a muscle of her beautiful face moving, and her dark eyes glowing with a passionate light.

"I am ready to die, Adanta," she cried. "When we stood together upon the mountain, I told you that I would die willingly. I loved you then, for you are the father of my child. But when I find your heart has no mercy for the daughter of a great chief and a priestess of the sun, I spit upon you. You are no better than a Moqui."

The chief literally gasped for breath. His hands opened and shut convulsively, and the captors of Kara, fearing he would rob them of their hoped-for revenge, carried her away to a lodge which was used as a prison, and placed a guard over her. But when the morning broke, and the sun, the god of their worship, came out in the clear sky overhead, the people of the village, young and old, came out to see the Navajo queen die.

A stake was set up in the plaza, and to this they led her, bold and defiant in her bearing. She never looked at her husband now, for she loved him no more, but upon some of the young Navajo girls her glance rested kindly, for she felt

that they pitied her, and did not willingly see her die. They bound her to the stake and piled the fagots high about her, and yet she had not quailed.

"Ask her where her friends are hidden," cried Adanta, turning to one of the women.

The girl advanced and asked the question. A look of scorn swept over the face of Kara.

"Did Adanta bid you ask that question?" she said, bitterly. "Tell him that my lips are sealed, and that I will not speak."

"Where is the boy? Where is the son of Adanta?" cried the chief, wildly.

"Never shall you see him," replied, Kara. "The brave man who has him will keep him safe from you and make him a gallant hunter and a brave man. I ask no more at his hands."

"Tell me where he is hidden," shrieked the chief. "Tell me, before the fires are lighted about you."

"Kara will not speak," she replied boldly. "Light the fire when you will."

"Have your wish, traitoress to the great tribe," screamed Adanta, dashing the torch he held into the pile. It caught the light tinder, and a slight blaze was seen curling upward, when the crowd parted before the rush of a strong man, and the brands were scattered from the stake.

The Navajoes rushed furiously upon the intruder, but he hurled them back with giant strength, and throwing off the blanket, revealed the hideously-painted face and long gray hair of the priest of the sun! They had not recognized him until now, and as they knew him, all recoiled in terror, for they believed it death to touch him in anger.

"Away!" he cried. "Who are ye, to do sacrifice without the aid of the priest of the sun? Fools! The sun-god is angry, and to-day I have saved you from his wrath. Fall back!"

CHAPTER IX.

"HOW AR' YE, INDIAN JIM!"

THE Navajoes looked with superstitious reverence upon this man, although, as we have seen, he was far from deserving it. But he had learned his lesson of hypocrisy well, and could assume at will an air of religious sanctity before which the simple Indians, trained as they had been, must bow. They obeyed his mandate and left a wide circle about the condemned prisoner, whose head had dropped lifeless upon her bosom; she had fainted.

The strange man hastily unbound her from the stake and lifted her in his arms. Up to this time Adanta had not thought of barring his way, but now he remembered that the priest had once been a suitor for the hand of Kara and had been refused for him. In a moment of passion he threw himself in the way.

"Where do you take her?" he cried, madly. "Priest of the sun, dare you rob the Navajoes of their revenge?"

"Let me see the man among the Navajoes who dares lay a finger upon my garment, or touch one who is in my protecting arms! Chief of the Navajoes, you tempt your fate. Beware that the sun does not darken his face to the tribe!"

"She must not go," hissed the chief. "The bad spirits have whispered in the ear of the priest of the sun, and have told him that he once loved Kara, Queen of the Navajoes, and that she is still very fair. Children of the tribe, your priest is tainted. Let him not destroy himself by doing greater wrong."

"Fool!" cried the priest, raising his hand with a lofty gesture. "Look up; your god darkens his face before you."

As he spoke he pointed toward the god of day. For some moments a shadow had been creeping over the village, and now, as they gazed, the grand orb began to change its color to a deep red, and a dark spot was seen creeping slowly over the outer rim. The Indians gazed upward in terror as the darkness increased, and they saw the sun disappearing from

their gaze in open day. Even Adanta was appalled, knowing nothing of the nature of the eclipse and being deeply imbued with the natural superstition of his race. The women, with screams of despair, ran to their lodges and crouched in terror beneath their shelter, for they thought that the evil day had surely come upon them, and that the face of their god was darkened forever. The priest lifted the still insensible form of the queen and bore her away, followed by a crowd of people praying to him to intercede with the sun-god and save them from this spell.

He answered not a word, but calling four stout warriors, gave the queen into their hands, and ordered them to carry her to the temple and give her in charge of Sunbeam.

They obeyed without a word of demur, and fierce glances were cast at Adanta as the man who had brought this woe upon them. Mutterings were heard, and some of the fiercer among the warriors began to crowd upon the chief, who stood immovable in the center of the plaza. But, as the priest came back they fell away again and the two stood alone in the plaza.

"You have scoffed at my power, chief of the Navajoes," cried the priest, "and now see how evil a day has come upon you. Behold how the sun darkens his face, because he has heard the words which you spoke against the priest."

"Adanta can die if he has brought evil upon the Navajoes," said the chief, proudly, "and if the god calls for me I am ready to go. Let a fire be lighted about Adanta and sacrifice him to the sun-god."

"It is good!" cried the Navajoes. "He has insulted the sun-god; give him for a sacrifice to the sun-god. The Navajoes doom him—it is our will."

The chief bowed his head and walked calmly to the fatal stake. A dozen officious hands—hands which he had touched in kindness a hundred times—were ready to bind him to the stake, and this undaunted man, who had sinned against the tribe, stood ready to expiate his offense with his life. The darkness grew greater, and the disk of the sun was narrowing more and more. The priest seemed to be in doubt. It was in his power to remove a hated rival forever from his path or he could save him. He glanced at the im-

movable face of Adanta, and struggled a moment with his own heart, and then his decision was made. He would save the chief.

"Touch him not, Navajoes!" he cried. "Let him stand at the stake while I go up to the temple and pray to the sun-god for his sake. If I do well, the shadow will go away from the face of the god; if not, then he is doomed. Insult him not while I am gone, for if the shadow goes away he is still the chief of the Navajoes."

He hurried away and rapidly ascended the lofty height toward the temple, running with a speed for which they had hardly given him credit. The chief remained at the stake, proud, erect, his dark eyes flashing over the assembled group, while he saw the dark disk slowly creeping over the face of the sun. The people ran about the streets in wild terror as the darkness grew greater.

"Woe is me, Navajo!" cried a weird old hag, the same who had met Sunbeam upon her return from the mountains. "Alas for the great nation. They are doomed because Adanta has been mad and has insulted the god."

The darkness increased and with it the terror of the people. Most of them imagined that the end of the world had come. Wild and high through the misty veil arose the wailing of women and children, scared by the unearthly gloom. Men hurried here and there in terror, and some were clamorous for the immediate sacrifice of the chief, so weak a thing is popularity in the face of danger. Some drew their weapons and threatened him, while others ran up toward the temple to fall upon their faces in the outer court, but none dared touch the chief against the commands of the priest.

Slowly, slowly, the shadow crept on, until the sun was only visible by a narrow rim, seemingly not wider than a knife-blade. Yet the priest had not come and the shadow was creeping on, and the gloom deepening more and more. The bright strip narrowed, and in a moment more they were in noonday darkness. Then Adanta spoke:

"Listen, Navajoes," he cried, his firm voice ringing out with the clear note of a trumpet. "Hearken to my words. If I have done wrong, light the fire about me; if I have brought evil upon the tribe I would not live longer."

Several started up at the summons and brought fire to light the pile, but, suddenly, the priest appeared among them, his white hair floating in the wind, and waved them back.

"He is saved; he is forgiven. Look up and behold the sign."

They looked and saw that the shadow was beginning to pass from the face of the sun, and soon their terror changed to the wildest joy. The hands which had been so busy in binding the chief now hastened to unloose him and brought him to the priest.

"Adanta," he said, "the sun-god has listened to my prayers and forgives the great insult you have offered him. From this time remember that I am his servant, and obey me when I speak."

Adanta did not speak, but drawing a long breath of relief, looked up at the widening strip which now showed upon the disk of the sun. For a moment he had doubted the power of the priest, but luck or accident, providence, call it what you will, had combined to aid the charlatan, and the chief bowed to the decree. Turning to the people the priest said:

"I give you your chief, who has escaped a great peril. He is wise and good, and will work better for the tribe. Trust him in all things and pray to the sun-god when you have need of help."

The wily priest strode back toward the temple, chuckling to himself as he passed along. Reaching the sacred edifice, he threw open the door in the wall, which he carefully barred behind him and went into the room where he usually dined. It was empty, but the door of Sunbeam's room was open and she called to him to come in.

Sunbeam was seated upon a low settle, cushioned with skins, with her arm passed about the waist of Kara, who was very pale. She looked wildly at the priest as he entered.

"Speak," she cried; "what has been done in the village?"

"He is saved," replied the priest; "it is well that my prayer was answered, for the people were lighting the pile."

"You ought to have let them go on," said the Sunbeam, in English. "The chief deserved almost as bad a fate as that, for he would have destroyed this beautiful child by the same torture."

"Adanta is a pure Indian, you must remember," protested the man; "and as such, believes in this purification by fire."

"You have done nobly," said the Sunbeam, "and I give you credit for it. Kara thanks you for what you have done."

"I want to ask one thing," said the priest. "How did Kara come here, in the first place? I saw her down in the vault when I went to sacrifice"—a smile appeared upon the face of Sunbeam, who understood this sly allusion to his drunken habits—"and I thought it was her ghost. I broke a very valuable instrument, I was so frightened."

"In other words, you broke the bottle," said Sunbeam, in English again. "She came in by the door in the south angle, which was known to her."

"That is it. Don't tell Kara about the liquor. I am getting tired of this life, and I would not be surprised if the Navajoes have to look for a new priest, as I am longing for the old life—the hunter's fire and the pleasures of the chase."

"It is a more noble calling than this," said Sunbeam, eagerly. "Let us escape; I, too, am tired of this life."

"I can not go yet," responded the man; "but, if you are good, and help me a few months longer, I do not know but I shall be willing to go. Are you stronger, queen of the Navajoes, he added, in the Indian tongue, and in the cold, proud manner he assumed with his priesthood."

"Kara is strong now," she said, rising and taking his hand. "Kara thanks the priest of the sun, without whose help she would now be dead, and her son without a mother."

"Where are these white men hiding?" said the priest, with a puzzled look. "This Death Man was in the village last night and killed a warrior. I do not like that, and it must be stopped, for the tribe has always treated me well."

"Who can stay the hand of the Mad Spirit?" said Kara. "He comes in darkness and strikes. The braves go out in chase, and find one with his mark upon the breast. He will never cease to slay the Navajoes."

"I have set Adanta upon his track," said the priest, musingly, "and I know not how it will end. The chief is a brave man, and one or the other must go down. Kara, would

you go back to the lodge of Adanta if he would receive you."

"Never!" cried Kara, starting to her feet. "He has insulted me--would have slain me, and I scorn him! Twice I have saved his life since he cast me off; I will do it no more."

"An' it's moighty right ye are, me darlint," said a voice at the door. "Sure I'm glad to see ye safe ag'in, alanah!"

All turned in surprise, and there, leaning against the door was the brawly form of Nick O'Connor, regarding them with a quizzical smile. The priest snatched up a spear in a manner which but ill accorded with his holy character, and Nick drew a pistol, but Kara darted between.

"Shoot not, my brother," she cried; "these are my friends, and you must not harm them."

"Thin let the ould man lay down the toastin'-fork he hev in his fist," cried Nick. "It rouses the angry passhins in me heart to see him wid that same."

"Who is this?" demanded the priest. "Tall Pine, I know you. What are you doing in the Navajo temple?"

"The ould man wants an introduction, noney," said Nick. "I'm Nick O'Connor, me fri'nd--wan of the b'ys ye rade av, from the ould dart--a broth av a b'y from Connaught, riddy to fight or shake hands wid ye, jist as ye loike."

"He is my friend," said Kara. "Put up the spear and take his hand."

"I know him," muttered the priest, turning to the Sunbeam, and speaking in a whisper; "and if it were not for the paint he would know me. Ask him what he seeks here, Kara."

"No need to ask that," put in Nick. "I've a small broth av a b'y down below, an' it's him is howlin' the top av his foot off fer his mother. Down by the statee, Kara."

The Navajo queen uttered a glad cry and darted away, and they heard her lift the stone which closed the way into the vault. Five minutes after she was back again, carrying the child in her arms, and covering its face with kisses. The little fellow was crowing delightedly, and his chubby arms were clasped about his mother's neck. The Indian mother sat down upon the floor and clasped him, rocking back and forth talking excitedly to the child.

Nick was looking keenly at the priest, as if something in his manner was familiar, and the man turned away with a smile.

"Look ye, ould man," said the Irishman, "be the sowl av O'Connor—ould Fergus, the moighty—I've seen ye afore."

The priest did not speak.

"The white hair puzzles me, upon me, wurd. Look ye here; were ye iver on the upper Platte? Spake out an' be a man."

"I have been in many places," replied the priest.

Nick sprung forward, and seizing the hand of the priest, rolled up his linen sleeve and looked at his arm, where, pricked in India ink, was the figure of an Indian warrior with a bow drawn to the head.

"Indian Jim, be the powers!" roared Nick. "Ye ould divil, I thought it wuz ye. Phat the divil are ye doin' here?"

"I knew you as soon as you came in," said the priest. "We will talk another time, but let it be known that my hand can never be raised against Irish Nick. Where are your friends?"

"They are down below in the fine ould rooms behind the statue," said Nick. "Only Kit Burt isn't there at all, at all, and the divil alone may know where he is."

"Who is Kit Burt?" cried the Sunbeam, starting up eagerly.

"This is in my hands," said the priest. "Kara, take the child and go into the vaults. Nick, go with her. Only Sunbeam can stay with me, and you must keep silent for your sives and mine."

They obeyed without a word, and the priest and Sunbeam were left alone.

CHAPTER X.

THE AVENGERS ON THE TRACK.

ADANTA lost no time in preparing to recover his lost popularity, and to fulfill the promise given the priest to destroy the Death Man. Excited by the situation which he now found environing him, he wanted action—stern action—to occupy his distracted thoughts, and at once summoned one of his personal adherents, a gallant young brave called Juan Navada. Let it be noted that most of the leading warriors and chiefs of the Navajoes have compound names, usually of Mexican origin. Juan was a tall, stately young Indian, a prairie dandy, dressed in the most gaudy costume of the tribe. He wore a sort of tunic of red and yellow cloth, with a rolling collar. Over this was a gay jacket of red, belted at the waist. His limbs were cased in yellow buck-skin leggins, ornamented with bullion fringe, and his moccasins displayed the fancy bead-work for which the Indians are so noted. Upon his head was one of those peculiar helmet-shaped hats worn only by the Navajoes. In his right hand he carried a long spear, and upon his left arm a leathern shield, for he had just come in from the plains.

“Juan,” said Adanta, “there is a great work before us, and we must have *men* to do it—not children. Choose among the fighting braves thirty who will never turn back in the day of battle. Have them at the lodge door as soon as you can. We are to follow the Death Man until we have taken him, alive or dead.”

The young warrior inclined his head without speaking, for the Indians never waste words.

“They must be men who love me, Juan Navada,” said the chief. “You understand that. Now go, and do your work.”

“Shall the braves take their horses, chief?” asked Juan.

“Yes; and let them be fully armed.”

The young warrior bowed and left the tent and was soon seen passing hastily among the warriors in the plaza, speak

ing to one here and there. Half an hour had not passed when he was at the door of the lodge and announced to the chief that they were ready.

Adanta stepped to the door and at a single glance saw that Juan had chosen well. There was not a man in the party who was not a gallant warrior, tried in a hundred fights, and their horses and arms were of the best description. A boy had brought up Adanta's horse and was leading him to and fro before the door—a noble black charger, of the wild mustang breed, which any except an Indian would have hesitated long before riding. Adanta buckled on his belt, thrust his knife and ax in it, caught up his spear and bounded into the saddle, his eyes flashing with the ardor of battle. Accoutered as they were, the party looked like knights of the old day about to ride upon a foray.

"For the Cañon de Chelle," cried Adanta. "The 'Death Man' haunts the place, and we must know how the Tall Pine and Kara escaped from the cave."

Twenty miles, as the crow flies, is as nothing to the fleet and hardy Indian horses, and early in the afternoon they reached the cañon near the spot where their enemies had been buried in that living grave. By taking an other pass they managed to bring the horses within half a mile of the place. Leaving them in charge of the men, the chief rapidly ascended the mountain to the plateau upon which the mouth of the cave was situated. Every thing was just as they had left it, and it was quite evident that the party had not escaped by the usual exit. Where, then, was the avenue of escape?

"There is a pass below," said the chief. "We must find it."

They rapidly descended into the ravine, and soon found a line of footsteps leading around a point of rocks. Following this trail, they arrived at a fissure in the mountains which seemed to extend far into its depths, and from this the trail came.

"Get torches, Juan," commanded the chief. "We must see where this pass leads."

The young warrior quickly supplied the needed articles from a fallen pine, the knots of which have peculiar resinous

qualities and burn like tinder, and three of them were quickly rubbed into a blaze. Adanta took one and led the way into the fissure, which was just wide enough to admit the passage of the body of a man, if he went forward stooping. Twenty minutes' walking brought them to the foot of an inclined plane up which Adanta dragged himself by a great effort, and they were within the cave which had been occupied by Kara and her friends. Their method of escape was now plain.

"See," cried Adanta, "the bad spirits of the hills must have taught them which way to go. Let us follow the trail, now that we know who has made it."

They descended rapidly and took up the trail, and night found them in the great cañon again, not far from the place where the horses had been left. Here they camped and waited for the morning. The party sat about the camp-fire talking of their future course, when Juan Navada, who had been out to look at the horses, came into camp and sat down a little apart from the rest with his head enveloped in his blanket.

"Are the horses safe, Juan?" asked the chief.

"Yes," replied Juan, shortly, as he took a pipe from his pouch and lighted it at the glowing coals. Something had gone wrong with the young warrior, for it was evident that he was not inclined to talk.

"Why does Juan Navada cover his face from his friends?" said Adanta.

"My heart is sick," was the reply. "Adanta, I know who the Death Man is, and why he hates us. I have never spoken before, but now it is time."

"Speak now, Juan," said the chief, eagerly. "My ears are open to hear your words."

"Come this way," said Navada. The chief followed him aside where the cliff cast a dark shadow, and here they sat down.

"Five years ago you went out upon the war-trail upon the south prairie. On the Santa Fe trail you found a party of white men who slept, little dreaming of surprise. They were ten in all, nine men and one girl. You fought them, and when the battle was over none was left with a scalp, save one, and he fell into a ravine where we could not find him."

"Adanta does not forget," said the chief. "What has this to do with the Death Man of the Navajoes?"

"Much, Adanta. That young warrior who fell into the ravine was a great brave. You did not find him because he was a cunning warrior, and, though wounded, concealed himself among the rocks. He lived, and from that time to this he has followed the Navajoes, slaying them wherever they were found. He is the Death Man—the Mad Spirit—the man you seek."

"How can this be, Juan? You were not with us when this was done. You never saw his face."

"It is true," persisted the young warrior. "I *know* that it is true."

"Juan Navada, are you mad?" cried the chief. "Why should he follow us, when there is nothing to gain by it? He can not know that any were saved, for the bodies were buried upon the plain."

"Saved?" cried Juan, eagerly, speaking in a voice entirely different from the one he had used before. "Who was saved?"

"Ha!" cried the chief. "You are not Juan Navada, though you wear his garments. Who are you then?"

"The Death Man!" cried the other, flinging aside his blanket and striking a quick blow with his hatchet which sent the chief reeling to the earth. "Take that!"

As the chief fell the strange being again raised the hatchet and seemed about to repeat the blow, but something stayed his hand. "Not yet," he murmured, "oh! not yet: your fate has yet to come."

As the alarm-cry of the chief was heard, a dozen warriors sprung to their feet and grasped their weapons. The Death Man turned and darted away toward the horses, but one of the guards started up before him and raised his spear for a blow. The Death Man dashed it aside and closed; there was a brief struggle and the Indian went down. The keen knife flashed a moment about his head, the hideous trophy was torn off, the fatal mark placed upon the breast almost in reach of the distracted Navajoes. A wild laugh was soon heard, and the Death Man appeared upon the back of Adanta's mustang, and went thundering down the pass, waving the bloody scalp about his head. Quickly he disappeared in the gloom of the night. They had found him all too soon!

Some of the warriors had hurried to raise Adanta and bring him to the fire. Only one thing had saved him from death, for the blow had been a terrible one. The cap which he wore had a circle of thin iron let into it, and the edge of the ax had glanced from it, inflicting a painful scalp-wound, but not one necessarily dangerous.

Some had mounted and were in pursuit of the Death Man, but they pulled up after going half a mile, keeping well together, for no one among them desired to cope with the terrible being alone in the darkness of these wild passes. They came back and brought in the body of the man last killed, but looking over their numbers, Juan Navada was not to be seen!

They called his name, but only the echoes mocked them. Some of the men hurried out, and found the body just beyond the horses, stripped of its gaudy tunic, leggins, cap and blanket, dead, with the six-pointed star upon the breast!

They understood now how the daring white man had penetrated the camp. They feared that the chief also was dead. Water was brought and dashed into his face, and he began to revive and looked wildly about him.

"Where is he—the Death Man?" he cried. "Dogs, have you let him escape?"

"We have done what we could," said one of the warriors, "but we could not come in time. He killed Gabriel Zana, took your horse, and is away."

"The sun-god is still angry," said the chief, in a whisper, averting his face. "Is Juan Navada dead?"

The warrior pointed silently to the motionless form, and Adanta raised himself upon his elbow and looked steadfastly at the dead brave, with an expression of unutterable sorrow upon his face.

"My sorrows are too much for me to bear," moaned the chief. "Warriors, we can not turn back now. All who loved Juan Navada must aid in slaying the Mad Spirit. Cover the bodies from the wolves, and when we have done our work, we will carry them to the village and lay them by their fathers."

"Is the chief badly hurt?" one of the warriors asked.

"How can Adanta feel pain for himself until Navada is

avenged?" replied the chief, testily. "Set guards about the horses, and let no man sleep this night; for to sleep when this man is in the hills is death. Navajoes, to your duty."

The fires were put out, and taking their weapons, the men stood about the horses through the night, so great was their fear of this one brave man.

Morning broke and he had not appeared, and Adanta, who had not slept, arose from the rock upon which he had been seated. His wound was painful, but he bore it with stoical composure, and none could have told by his face that he was not perfectly at ease. The men had already buried the bodies of the slain, among the stones, where they could be readily found, if they chose to remove them to the village. This done, the horses were brought up, Adanta mounted the steed of Juan Navada, and they took the trail, for now they thought no more of the old one, which they had followed before. The track of the Death Man was before them, and they were sworn never to give up the pursuit until he was dead, or a prisoner in their hands.

From the length of the black mustang's stride, they knew that their enemy had been urging him to his utmost speed, riding with a reckless daring over a way which was difficult to pass even in open day, and going toward the village. His daring in thus penetrating the Navajo country, after all the evil he had wrought, filled the chief with wonder.

"His work is not yet done," said Adanta, "and he does not fear us. Did he speak the truth last night—was it indeed the young white man who fell into the ravine?"

"Could not Adanta see his face, when he threw off the blanket?" asked a warrior.

"No; we were in the shadow, and something I said made him forget, and he spoke in his own voice. Before I could draw a weapon or look at him, he struck me down."

"Ugh!" cried the warrior. "He is a great brave. See, the trail leads toward the village, and he knows the way."

They had now emerged from the pass, and the trail led across the open prairie. The Avenger had not slackened his speed in the least, or made any attempt at hiding the trail from his pursuers, evidently intending to ride through night. They pushed their horses rapidly on the tracks, Adanta keep-

ing in advance, with his eyes upon the trail. A mile from the village, the trail turned into a pass, which led into the ranges near the temple of the sun.

"Why has he gone here?" thought the chief. "He can not escape by this road."

They went up the pass rapidly, and were approaching the level, when a sound was heard as of something breaking through the chaparral on the right. At this point the trail ended suddenly.

"Go and see what stirs the bushes," ordered the chief, to one of his young braves.

The young man dismounted, and hurried into the chaparral with his weapons ready. Shortly after he came back, leading the black mustang by the bridle. The beast had been hard run the night before, for his flanks were gored by a knife-point, and his shoulders flecked with foam, which had been dry for some hours. The Death Man was somewhere near at hand. They must find him out.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LONG LOOK AHEAD.

WE left the party of white men with Kara and her child in the old heathen temple under the earth, in charge of the priest of the sun, who had been so suddenly made their friend by the appearance of Nick O'Connor. It was plain that they had met before, and under circumstances which had placed the priest under obligations to the giant trapper. But would he be true to them? The Indian is proverbially treacherous, and he could gain great popularity with his tribe by betraying them to the enemy.

Sunbeam was in doubt, as she thought him to be a man utterly without principle, who lived upon the credulity and superstitions of his race, a perfect charlatan, and yet she had seen in him some signs of a noble nature, warped by the wild life he had led before he came back to the tribe, and assumed the priesthood.

"You look strangely at me, Sunbeam," said the priest. "Do you not think that it would be best for me to betray this party to Adanta?"

"Why do you ask that question, when you know that I should regard it as an act of the basest perfidy on your part?" she answered.

"Very true, Sunbeam. It would be base and treacherous, as you say, but, which course would *pay* me best? That is really the main question now?"

"It is not the main question," replied Sunbeam, looking at him steadily. "I saw your face when you recognized the Irishman, O'Connor, and I know that, for some reason, you love him."

"That is very true," replied the priest. "It is a small matter which I do not care to mention, but he saved my life once from the Kioways when they had me bound to the stake. But then, how foolish it is to let a small affair like that stand between me and my interests. O'Connor is a good man—no better on earth—but I am a Navajo priest, and ought to betray him."

Sunbeam laughed aloud, for she detected under the affected veil of doubt a strong determination to stand by them to the last.

"This is nonsense," she said, laying her hand upon his arm. "Adanta might cut you into pieces and you would not betray either O'Connor or Kara. I have read your heart at last. Another thing: you have been a fighting man, and this garb ill becomes you. Cast aside the life of indolent ease which you have lived for the last six years and be again a hunter and warrior, with O'Connor as a friend."

The priest drew a long breath and looked hard at her.

"You tempt me strongly," he at length half sighed, "but, what would become of *you*?"

"I shall find friends, if I once get to the white settlements. They think me dead, and I shall surprise them when I return and claim my own. Think of it, six years of death in life, cooped up in this hideous place. But I thank you for bringing me here and making me your assistant, for my office has protected me from insult."

"I thought of that," said the priest, eagerly. "You can

say one thing, Sunbeam. Drunk or sober, I have never insulted you by a look or word."

"That is true," she added, "and I have much to be thankful for. But Ralph—my noble lover—who shall avenge your death upon this vile man, Adanta the chief."

"Who was Ralph?"

"The man who was to have been my husband. I saw him fall, fighting like a hero. My father was already dead, the trappers overpowered, my little brothers lying bleeding at my feet, and I alone was left. Poor Ralph!"

"I am sorry for you," said the priest. "Where would you go if you could get back to the settlements?"

"To New Orleans, where I have relatives living, and many friends who would give me a shelter and a home. Hark; did you not hear a noise?"

"It seems to me that something stirred upon the floor outside," whispered the man. "Wait; I will see for myself."

He looked into the next room and saw no one, but, stepping hastily to a pile of skins against the wall, he pushed them aside, and a small, sharp-looking Indian boy was revealed, lying prostrate on the floor. He sprung up and would have escaped, but that the priest caught him by the wrist and dragged him back.

"Ha!" he cried, assuming all the stern air of the priest. "How dare you crawl into my presence? What are you doing here, in the temple of the sun?"

The boy did not answer, but fixed his small glittering eyes upon the face of the speaker.

"You have been sent here to spy upon me, young dog. Speak quickly, before I strike you dead at my feet."

"Why should the priest strike a child?" demanded the boy, sullenly. "I came because I was sent, and my ears have been open. What have you done with Tall Pine, Kara, and the boy of Adanta? We must have them back."

The priest caught the lad by the shoulders and dragged him into the next room, threatening his life if he cried out. The lad kept silent, for he knew the uselessness of resistance.

"Who have you there?" asked Sunbeam.

"A spy!" hissed the priest, "who has crept like a snake

to hear what we have said. Give me that knife in your belt."

Sunbeam drew back hastily. "A knife! What would you do?"

"I would put it out of the power of this young dog to betray us. I would cut out his tongue at the roots."

The boy began to tremble in every limb, and then to struggle for liberty, but the priest held him fast.

"Surely you would not do that?" said Sunbeam, withdrawing further, for she supposed that the priest really was in earnest. "He is only a boy."

"The small snake will grow," replied the priest, in a savage tone. "Give me the knife, I say, and I will cut out his heart and give it to the sun-god for a sacrifice."

The boy was thoroughly scared, and Sunbeam saw that the object of the priest was to frighten him into telling who had sent him, and his purpose in coming. The plan succeeded well, for, as Sunbeam gave the sharp knife into the hand of the priest, the boy fell on his knees and began to beg for his life.

"Listen, young snake," said the priest. "Who sent you up to the temple?"

"I can not tell," replied the boy; but, as the knife was lifted high above him, he uttered a cry of terror and said:

"Adanta sent me."

"Tell all!" fiercely commanded the priest. "Why did he send you?"

"He said, 'Kara is in the temple of the sun, and where Kara is, there also is the child and Tall Pine. Go to the temple and crawl like a snake until you find where Kara and the child are hidden, and then hasten and bring the tidings back to me.'"

"Ha! what have you heard?"

"All the words you spoke to the Sunbeam," replied the boy, quickly.

"You have heard too much," said the priest. "Bring a rope, Sunbeam; this boy must be kept a prisoner."

Sunbeam brought out a lariat, which she cut into three pieces, and with this the priest bound the prisoner fast. Then, bidding Sunbeam go before and open the sliding stone, he

took up the boy in his arms and carried him down the steps into the chamber of the sun-god.

"Take out the stone on the right," he enjoined.

Sunbeam undid a sort of clasp upon the wall, and took out a square stone, revealing an opening in the wall about four feet wide and six feet long. Into this the young prisoner was thrust. He could just stand upright in the confined space, but could not move about. When the stone was replaced he did not find the place confined, for a current of air entered it from one end.

"He is safe for the present," said the priest, replacing the stone and pulling the clasp into its place, "but this happened unluckily. We must get away from here within two days, and be on our way to the Rio Grande."

"You agree to go then?" cried the Sunbeam, eagerly.

"I *must* go now," was the answer. "This once known, it will be too hot for me in the Navajo country. Let us go and see the rest."

They passed by the statue into a large room behind it, where they found Ned Dangerfield lying on his back, studying the old inscription with the zeal of an antiquarian, and taking sketches; Nick O'Connor cleansing his rifle, and Kara, with a look of supreme happiness upon her beautiful face, watching the slumbers of the boy who lay upon her knees. The priest stopped and looked at them quietly.

"The top av the mornin' til ye, Jim," said Nick, looking up from his work. "Faith, an' I'm moighty glad yees have come. Ned, in such a place as this, is no use to any man; Kara have the child on her lap an' won't look at any wan, an' I'm the only feller that's ready to talk. Come now, old b'y, sit down foreninst me, an' let's have a chat."

"It is no time for useless talk," replied the priest. "We are in danger."

"Hear til him!" roared Nick. "He's as bad as the rist av them. We used to call him the 'edicated savage' whin he were on the North Platte. What's the danger now, ye ould divil?"

"We have caught a young spy," replied the pretender, "and I have him fast locked up in a hole in the wall. Where is your other friend? It is surely time you heard from him."

"He tould us to go our way widout thinkin' av him," said Nick. "He's a wild divil afther scalps, that same Kit Burt. It's jist fun for him to make the wool fly."

"Surely he will come back," said Sunbeam. "I must see him. Something which Kara has said has aroused my interest in him, and I must know who and what he is."

"He is just the bravest man I ever saw," added Ned Dangerfield, looking up from his work. "When we were sealed up in the cave and thought our lives at an end, he was cool, and brave, ready to meet his fate like a man. I hope nothing has happened to him."

"Does he know the way to get into the temple when he comes?" asked the priest.

"He says that he has been here twice before, and that he came in by a far different way from the one we used. He has a strange knowledge of every thing in the Navajo country."

The priest mused for a moment, and then arose. "I am going to the village," he said, "and I shall be able to judge what had best be done when I come back. Remain quiet, for you know not what may happen in my absence."

The priest was gone for some hours, and came back to report that all was quiet in the village, and that Adanta and a picked band had gone out toward the Cañon de Chellé, in search of the Avenger, known as the "Death Man," who had been again at work in the village. We can not leave this place while Adanta is in the mountains, for we might meet him at any moment. We must wait until he returns, and then slip away at night."

"We must not stay too long," said the Navajo Queen, with a shudder. "Woe to me and woe to my child, if we should fall into Adanta's hands now. Look! I have a sharp knife, and the hands of the chief shall never bind me to the stake again. Kara will sooner die by her own hand, as a Navajo queen should."

She had arisen with her boy brave in her arms, his head resting on her shoulder. Her brilliant eyes had a look of lofty heroism, and they knew that she would keep her word, should the time ever come.

"You have only to keep quiet," said the priest. "No No

REPOSE.

Navajo dare enter this place without permission from me, the priest of the temple, and while we keep our prisoner, we are safe!"

"I'm thinkin' ye'd betther have some horses handy by," said Nick, "so that when we go, we may go quick."

"I shall see to that," said the priest, proudly. "You know the man you call Indian Jim, and he is not a fool. Sunbeam take Kara and the child, and go to your room. You who are men, can sleep upon the floor of the temple."

Sunbeam signed to Kara to follow her, and they passed out of the room, and were heard walking through the long passages above.

After they had gone, the three men lay down to secure what repose they could, for they did not expect to get away from the Indian village without a struggle which would test all their powers of endurance.

The night passed without interruption, but in the gray morning Nick was aroused by the touch of a hand upon his face. He started up with his grasp upon a weapon, and saw Kit Burt standing over him, a smile upon his stern face.

"Where have ye been?" whispered the Irishman. "Sowl o' me body, man, but ye look fierce as a jaguar."

"I have reason to be," replied Kit Burt, "for I have had warm work. Look you, Nick O'Connor, you have been in the Navajo village. Did you see any prisoners there?"

"The divil a wan."

"Still there might be—one whom you did not see—a beautiful girl, the most lovely woman on earth."

"I didn't see any such prisoner," said Nick. "Ah! the Sunbeam. Mayhap it's the Sunbeam ye mane?"

"The Sunbeam? Who is she?"

"Rest aisy. Ye'll see her in the morning!"

"I have waited six years," said Kit Burt, sitting down upon a stone. "I can wait still."

CHAPTER XII.

ADANTA ENTRAPPED.

He sat for some moments in deep thought, and then aroused himself as if with an effort.

"She must not see my face at first," he said, "for the shock may be too much for her if it is indeed as I scarcely dare to hope. Oh, my darling—my darling! After so many years to find you at last!"

He opened a small haversack which he always carried with him, and took out a small bottle, with the contents of which he proceeded to stain his hands and face. When he had finished, his face was that of an Indian in color, and his high cheek-bones added to the delusion. He now stood up, and throwing off his outer garments, appeared in the full costume of a Navajo warrior, with the exception of the cap, and walking back into the next passage, brought out even this, and, as he stood there in his gaudy dress, a Navajo might have been deceived.

"Be the powers av mud, Kit!" protested the Irishman, "ye look so much like a Navajo that me heart's broke because I can't lift yer hair."

Kit gathered up his clothing and carried it away, and came back just as the stone was lifted and Indian Jim came down. The moment his eyes rested upon the disguised white man, he caught up a spear, and but that Nick interposed, would have attacked the man he took for a Navajo.

"Kape back!" roared Nick. "Aisy, ye villain, aisy! This is Kit Burt that I tould ye about. Kit, darlin', don't let yer angry pashins rise. This is a fri'nd of ours, who, although playin' high praste to the Navajoes, is willin' to assist us out of this scrape."

"Ha!" cried Indian Jim, "this is a Navajo; I know him well."

"My disguise ought to be a good one if it deceives a Navajo," said Kit Burt, in English.

The priest looked at him in wonder for a moment, and then laid aside the spear, but there was a puzzled expression upon his face.

"This dress," he said, laying his hand upon the gay blanket on the shoulder of Kit Burt—"I knew the man who wore it."

"He will wear it no more," said Kit, quietly. "I am in disguise, and do not wish to be known to the girl you call Sunbeam. Will you remember that?"

"Yes; shall Kara know?"

"It is not necessary," he replied. "Hush! here they come."

As he spoke, they heard light feet descending the steps, the sound of musical voices, and Kara, carrying her child and followed by the Sunbeam, entered the room. The moment that the eyes of Kit Burt rested upon the latter, he started violently, and stifled a cry which arose to his lips, apparently with the utmost difficulty, and staggered to a seat upon the rock with his hand pressed upon his heart. Kara looked at him wildly, for she too recognized the costume which he wore.

"Look, priest," she cried; "what does the friend of Adanta here? Have you dared to betray us?"

"This is not the friend of Adanta," replied the priest. "He is our friend now, and will help us to escape. Speak, Navajo; is it not true?"

"I am not the friend of Adanta," replied Kit Burt, in a stifled voice. "I will aid you to escape."

"It is well," said Kara. "I could not believe that you would be false to me, of all others. Narramissa," addressing the priest by his Indian name, "can he tell us any thing of Adanta and his men?"

"They have been in pursuit of the Death Man in the Cañon de Chellé," he replied, still speaking the Navajo language, "and will return to-day. After that, we must try to escape."

"Have they taken the Death Man, then?" demanded the priest.

"No; he was not born to be destroyed by an Indian," replied the disguised white man. "What he has done has been for a purpose. His work is accomplished, and from this hour,

unless the Navajoes seek the Death Man, they will not fall by his hands."

"He has wronged the Navajoes much," said Indian Jim, in a doubtful tone.

"They have wronged him more," was the reply. "All that he loved upon earth perished under their spears upon the Santa Fe trail. Those who died that day had never wronged the Navajoes. They were peaceful men who were traveling to a western home for the security and peace which was denied them before. From that hour the avenger has been upon the Navajoes' track. That he has done something for revenge, let the Navajo annals tell."

He arose and walked closer to the side of Sunbeam, looking at her intently. He seemed to struggle with himself, but conquered at last.

"I will not speak now," he said, at last. "You, too, have been wronged, how much I alone can tell, for I alone know. Adanta has much to answer for."

"What do you know of my wrongs, Navajo?" asked Sunbeam, quickly. "Who are you, for I see by your face that you are not the man I took you for at first, although you wear his garb?"

"Kit Burt!" was the answer. "No doubt my friends have spoken of me to you."

"They have indeed, and have not spoken except in terms of praise. Why have you assumed this disguise?"

"It was necessary to my purpose," replied the young borderer, "and I will wear it now until we are free from these Navajo villains."

At this moment Indian Jim, who had been in the upper part of the ruin, came down to them with a look of fear on his face.

"The morning has passed quickly," he said. "It is the time for the priest to appeal to the idol, and Adanta is at the door demanding admittance."

"Will he come here?" cried Kit Burt, starting forward.

"He will come into the room where the idol stands," replied Indian Jim.

"Is his band with him?"

"No; they are camped in the woods, half a mile away."

"Very good. Then tell him that the face of the sun is clouded, and that he will not speak until night, and send him away. If he comes back at night, we shall know what to do."

"Leave it to me," said the priest. "Narramissa is not a fool."

He went up again into the square opening made by the ruined walls, where Adanta stood, leaning upon his spear.

"Has the sun-god spoken to his priest?" demanded the chief.

"He has *not* spoken," was the reply. "The god is mute until the sun goes into the earth, and then he will speak to Adanta."

The chief made a gesture of impatience, for he did not like this delay.

"Has Adanta forgotten the past?" demanded the priest, sternly. "Once the face of the god was clouded and Adanta forgot his power. If the great being had not relented, the ashes of the chief would be scattered to the four winds. Will he dare tempt his fate so soon?"

The chief was staggered, for he remembered how near he had been to death.

"What shall I do?" he said, humbly.

"Come when the sun has gone to rest," replied Narramissa. "Bring with you six horses, the strongest and fleetest of all, and picket them within this place, for the sun-god calls for a sacrifice. When you have done this, strike three times upon the door and I will answer."

"Is there any thing more?"

"Yes. Speak to your warriors, the avengers who follow upon the track of the Death Man, and tell them to go further back into the woods, to the place where the tall pine stands alone in the midst of the woods, and there wait for you."

"Adanta has heard the words of Narramissa and will do as he commands."

The chief bowed his head gravely and turned away. The stately bearing of the priest had had its effect upon him, and he believed his words and would obey. Narramissa went down to his friends with a smile upon his face.

"He will come," he said, "and he will come alone at night. My brothers, when we are safe from the Navajoes, remember that Narramissa was your friend."

"May devils confound them if they ever forget," replied Nick O'Connor. "But they won't, ould Jim; sorra taste av that same."

"You will find that we have memories," added Kit Burt. "Now, then, let us wait for the coming of Adanta."

The hours crept slowly on, and the sun went down behind the hills. A deep gloom fell upon the ruined temple, and they began to expect the coming of the chief. Kara was concealed in the upper part of the building, and Narramissa was watching in the outer court. Just after dusk the tramp of horses was heard and six Navajoes rode into the court and dismounted, picketing the horses within the inclosure.

"My warriors will now return to the solitary pine and wait for me," commanded the chief. "See that six horses are brought from the village, for the sun-god demands these as a sacrifice. Now, go."

The warriors silently obeyed, and Adanta advanced to the door, upon which he struck three blows. It opened so suddenly as almost to startle the chief, and Narramissa stood upon the threshold.

"Adanta has kept his word," said the proud chief. "Now let Narramissa lead the way into the presence of the sun-god."

The priest led the way in silence. The stone was already removed, and they passed without interruption into the sacred vault, where the fire was already blazing in the brazier before the idol.

"Let the Sunbeam appear!" cried Narramissa, in a commanding voice. He had hardly spoken when the beautiful white girl glided silently into the vault and took her place beside the brazier. The priest approached with the cloth which was always flung over the head of the man who questioned the idol, and enveloped him in its folds. Instead of leaving him when his arms were hampered by the cloth, the muscular arms of the priest were thrown about his body, pinioning him as in a vise.

"Ha, Narramissa," cried the chief, struggling. "What would you do?"

Other feet were heard upon the stone floor, strong hands were laid upon the chief, and he was thrown to the floor. Other hands dragged away the cloth, and at a glance he saw the trap which had been set for him.

Nick O'Connor was bending over him, holding a knife at his breast. Ned Dangerfield and Burt held him upon either side, and Narramissa stood over him with folded arms, looking calmly down upon him.

"Dog—traitor!" hissed the chief. "Have you turned against the Navajoes?"

"Bring the lariats, Sunbeam," called out Ned Dangerfield. "We have no time to bandy words with him."

"I will have your heart's blood for this!" screamed the chief. "Was it for this you sent for the horses, that you might escape from the Navajo country?"

Sunbeam came back with some pieces of lariat, with which the hands and feet of the chief were tightly bound. He had ceased to struggle, but there was a malignant expression in his eyes, which boded no good should they ever come into his power.

"There!" said Nick, as he tied the last knot with the hand of an artist. "Now I hope ye fale aisy in yer mind. It's harr'd to tear ourselves away, but we must part. Good-by, ye thafe; good-by."

"We part now, Adanti," said the Sunbeam. "You have done much evil, and I ought to be thankful that we spare your life. It is punishment enough to know that you will never see the faces of your wife and child again."

"Let me bid him farewell," said Kit Burt, and as he spoke he bent and whispered a short sentence in the ear of the bound chief. He uttered a wild cry of rage, and tugged at his bonds until the cords cut into the flesh. Kit Burt laughed bitterly, and rising, signed to the rest to follow, and left the vault. Ten minutes after the party mounted the horses which the chief had so kindly brought, and bade good-by to the crumbling ruin which had furnished them a shelter, and which to Sunbeam had been a refuge and a home.

CHAPTER XIII.

FAREWELL TO THE NAVAJOES.

THE night was intensely dark, and the clouds hung low about the mountains, tokens of the coming storm. Perhaps no night could have been better chosen for their escape unperceived, and the party rode on through the deepening gloom in silence, for they knew not at what moment they might fall in with a wandering Navajo band. Kit Burt took the advance, and Indian Jim rode by his side, to aid him by his intimate knowledge of the country. Behind these came Nick O'Connor with Kara and her child, and still behind these, Ned Dangertield and the Sunbeam. Adanta had chosen the finest horses, misled by the cunning priest, and they were soon miles away upon the prairie, toward the Cañon de Chellé. The storm burst just as they entered the pass, and Kit Burt at once led the way to a sheltered ravine, where the horses would be safe under an overhanging cliff, and they could find rest in one of those convenient rock shelters, which he knew so well.

"It won't do to stay here long, I give you warning," he said, as he helped Sunbeam to dismount. "Adanta is a cunning man, and may escape before morning, and if he does, he will waste no time. You see that rocky shelf yonder, Nick. Under that you will find a small dry hole, where the ladies can find shelter. I will, myself, stand guard in the pass while the storm lasts.

He mounted and rode back, while Nick proceeded to dispose of the females of the party in the manner suggested by the leader. The arms and ammunition were placed in the same receptacle, and the men sheltered themselves as best they could among the rocks, for the cave was not large enough for all. An hour passed and the rain was falling with slackening speed, when the sound of hoofs were heard and Kit Burt dashed rapidly up.

"Get the women out as soon as you can," he said, hurriedly.

ly. "A large party of Navajoes, at least thirty in all, are already in the cañon, and I think I heard the voice of that accursed Adanta. Hurry, Nick; bring out the horses."

The two women had learned to be ready for danger at all times, and were in the saddle as soon as the men. The pass they occupied crossed the cañon laterally, and led into another pass, not far from the spot where Nick and Dangerfield had met and defeated the force of Navajoes upon the first day. The storm had spent its fury, and although the rain still fell it was with diminishing force.

"Be careful now," whispered Kit. "If they hear us we are doomed, for in this weather spears and arrows are better than powder and ball. Give me that blanket, Ned. Kara has taken her own from her shoulders to wrap the boy in. Put this on, Kara; are *you* comfortable, Mabel?"

"Mabel!" cried Sunbeam, forgetting herself in her excitement. "Who are you that know my name?"

"We have no time to dally," he said, hoarsely. "Come on."

And they rode away slowly through the pass, leaving behind them the signal-cries and whistles of their pursuers. Who were they?

We left Adanta lying upon his back at the foot of the statue, to all appearance bound beyond the chance of escape. He looked about him by the light of the glowing brazier, his heart full of rage, for he knew that those he hated were escaping and by his help. The thought that he had actually furnished the horses for their flight drove him half mad. Would his men wait until morning, or would they get impatient and come for him before? He shouted aloud and only the echoes of the old ruin mocked him. What had Kit Burt whispered to him that his fury grew so great when he thought of it? The chief strained at his bonds with all his power, but they only cut the deeper into his flesh. Kara was away, and she had taken with her the boy upon whose future his heart was set so deeply. She would carry him far away and he could never hope to see the child of his love. Again he cried aloud and beat his head against the stone floor. As he did so he heard a slight tapping upon the wall near at hand.

"Ha!" he cried, "who is there?"

"Come nearer to the wall, great chief," cried a hollow voice. "It is I, Little Raven, shut up in the wall."

The chief could not rise, but he rolled himself over until he reached the spot in which Little Raven seemed to be confined. By the light of the brazier, he saw the clasp which confined the stone in its place, and by the effort of his utmost muscular power raised himself against the wall until he could seize the clasp in his teeth and loosen it. This done he shouted to the boy to push upon the stone with his feet and it fell out upon the floor. A moment after Little Raven appeared, sliding, feet first, out of the cavity. His hands and feet were also bound.

"We can not help each other," said the chief, in agony. "You, too, are bound."

"Little Raven has teeth like a beaver," said the boy. "Let the chief lie down on the floor and he shall soon be free."

The chief understood him, and lay down in such a position that the boy, by lying upon the floor beside him, could reach the bonds upon his hands with his teeth. The lariat was tough, but the teeth of Little Raven were sharp, and in the course of half an hour the bonds fell from the arms of the chief. He uttered a cry of delight and quickly threw off the lariat from his lower limbs and stood erect.

"Aha!" he cried, "at last I am free—free, and those who have insulted me shall feel the wrath of a chief, outraged as no other Navajo chief has been since the tribe was known, and that in the temple of the sun."

He hastily unbound the Little Raven, who told him how it was that he was a prisoner while the chief was occupied in casting off his bonds.

"It is good," said Adanta. "Narramissa is a traitor too, and has deceived the Navajoes for years. He shall be burnt alive before the sun-god. Come."

They hurried up the steps and away into the woods where the men were in waiting. Over three hours had been lost, and the fugitives had gained greatly upon them, but Adanta hoped to overtake them yet, and but for the chance of losing more time he would have gone to the village for more help, for he knew the desperate character of the men they pursued; but, they could not afford delay, and the party mounted

and rode away toward the Cañon de Chelle, having satisfied themselves that the whites had taken that direction. The Navajoes made such good use of their horses that they were barely an hour behind the fugitives, and at a time when the storm was coming in all its fury. This was the party which Kit Burt had seen entering the pass.

It was still intensely dark, and for two hours the fugitives wound their way through the passes, guided by Burt, who knew every step of the ground in the mountains. Nothing had been heard from the Indians for some time, and Kit, fearing that they might blunder upon one of their parties in the darkness, called a halt, and the women dismounted in a sheltered ravine, under a projecting shelf.

"We must wait until morning, although I do not like to take the chances," said Kit. "Two or three Navajo parties are out on the plains, and we might meet one of them at any moment. But come; since we must pass the night here, let me show you a citadel, where we could fight the whole Navajo nation with a good chance of success."

"Shall we take the horses?" asked Ned Dangerfield.

"No; they may as well remain here, but picket them strongly. Bring all the blankets, Nick, for the ladies are tired out. Dangerfield, help Ma—the Sunbeam, and let Indian Jim give his hand to Kara."

They turned out of the pass, and began the ascent of the rocks by a flight of natural steps, which brought them to a rocky ledge, perhaps eight feet wide, along which they walked with great caution, aided by the light of the moon which was now breaking through the banks of clouds to the East. After a toilsome ascent of fifteen minutes' duration, they reached a rocky platform, at least three hundred feet above the pass. Along the front of this ran a sort of rampart built up by the hand of nature. The only approach to this strange place was the one which they had taken, and behind them arose the towering sides of a mighty peak, guarding the rear and flanks of the position. Three men, armed as this party was, might make a stand against an army.

"And best of all," said Kit Burt, "there is a spring upon a mountain, about a hundred yards in the rear. Give us provisions, and we will defy the whole Navajo nation."

"We have nothing," said Indian Jim. "Adanta could besiege us here and starve us to death."

Kit Burt laughed merrily. "You don't know me yet, I can see," he cried, "or you would not think me so foolish as to take such a risk as that. Come here."

He went back a few paces and began to throw aside a pile of stones. After a moment's labor he disclosed a large package carefully hidden beneath.

"What is this?" said the ex-priest.

"This is one of my old haunts which I keep provided. Now do you think we can stand a siege?"

Jim nodded gravely and began to respect a man who showed himself so much of a General in providing against want. Nick, after looking over the position of affairs with a satisfied air, went down into the pass after something which had been forgotten, and the rest were waiting for him, when they heard a furious oath and the rattle of hoofs in the pass below. The oath came from the Irishman, and soon they heard him clambering up toward them.

"Ochone, ochone!" he cried. "May the skirts av me coat be me shroud av that little divil didn't turn ivery horse loose."

"What do you mean?" cried Kit, eagerly, starting forward.

"The little thafe we put in the hoole in the wall, Jim."

Indian Jim started and struck his forehead fiercely with his open palm. He understood now that Adanta and the boy had in some way contrived to give each other help and to follow on their track.

"They have run us down, then," said Kit Burt, "and the best thing we can do is to fight them. It is lucky that we were near this place, for there is no better spot for defense in the mountains."

"I got a glimpse av the little haythen on the last horse," said Nick, "but what was the use av thryin' to shoot him on the run. The horses was gone, sure. Och, av I had only cut his throat whin we had him!"

"Hark!"

Wild cries of joy announced that the Navajo band had received Little Raven from his successful scouting expedition, and would soon be at hand. The defenders silently loaded

their weapons, and Indian Jim tossed away the white wig which he had worn so long, took up the spear and ax, and looked every inch the warrior that he was. Kara laid her sleeping child wrapped in a blanket in a warm place between the rocks, and strung her bow. The lioness was ready to fight for her young. Nick O'Connor, after a single glance at her set face, saw how useless it would be to oppose her, and made ready his rifle, for the Navajoes were already swarming into the pass, eager for the fray.

They were desperate men, the pick and flower of the tribe, led by a man whom repeated crosses had made almost a maniac. The horses were picketed in the glade, and with wild shouts of rage they began to spring up the rocks. Five men fell by the deadly rifles before they had passed over a hundred feet, and then for the same distance the rocks concealed them from view. The rifles were again loaded; Kara fitted an arrow to the string and waited just as the Indians rushed out, two abreast, to receive the deadly fire. The front seemed to wither away before the volley, and two of the slain were pierced through the bosom by the arrows of Kara and Indian Jim. Yet they did not hesitate or turn aside, and fifteen were left alive when they came up to the rocky rampart.

Kit Burt had thrown aside his rifle and took to the hatchet and knife, as the weapons with the use of which he was best accustomed, but the revolvers of Ned Dangerfield and Nick O'Connor, and the arrows of the Navajo Queen and Narramissa, were playing with deadly effect upon the remaining Indians as they strove to climb the rocky wall. Ned Dangerfield's right arm hung powerless by his side, pierced by a feathered shaft. Narramissa was slightly wounded, when five men, headed by Adanta, forced their way over the wall. One of these went down under a blow from Kit Burt's hatchet, and they stood man to man. Each singled out an opponent, and Kit Burt was opposed to Adanta. Nick O'Connor, dashing aside the weapons of his immediate opponent, grasped him by the shoulder and hip, struggled a moment, and hurled him to the earth with stunning force. Ned Dangerfield, unable to use his right arm, was warding off the blows of his assailant as well as he could, when a strong arm shot past him, and a huge fist was planted in the face of the Indian—a blow

which might have killed an ox. Nick O'Connor had come to the rescue of his friend.

"Come til me!" yelled Nick. "Hooroo!"

Narramissa had mastered his enemy easily, but Adanta and Kit Burt were engaged in a deadly struggle as Dangerfield and Nick rushed to his aid. They came too late, for the iron muscles of Kit Burt had earned the mastery, and the chief went down and a knife gleamed above him. But Kara—Kara, who had suffered so much at his hand, who had been doomed to the stake by him, could not forget that he was her husband, and caught the descending arm.

"Save him," she cried. "Let him go back to his people."

"Strike!" screamed Adanta. "I will not take my life at her hands."

But Kit Burt's mood had changed, and calling to his friends, they quickly bound the struggling chief.

"Ha, Death Man!" he hissed. "Why do you not kill me and set the mark upon my breast?"

The Death Man! All recoiled at that terrible name. Even Sunbeam looked at Kit Burt with a species of horror. He thrust his hand into his bosom and took out a bottle, and poured from it a fluid into the hollow of his hand, with which he washed the brown stain from his face. Then, dashing off the helmet cap, he turned upon the Sunbeam.

"Do you know me, Mabel Lee?" he cried.

She looked at him in doubt a moment, and then, with a rapturous cry—"Ralph! Ralph!" threw herself upon his bosom.

For the Death Man of the Navajoes, Kit Burt and Ralph Swinton, the destined husband of Mabel Lee, were one and the same person.

Saved by Adanta from the weapons of his men, upon the night when her family were slain, she had been claimed by Narramissa to aid him in the temple.

Ralph Swinton had fallen into a deep ravine, and managed to crawl to a place of hiding before the Navajoes descended to search for him, and though wounded, he had at length recovered.

He had nothing to live for then except revenge, for he did not know that Mabel had been saved.

He devoted his life to that purpose, and made himself a terror to the Navajo nation.

He had a dozen haunts among the hills, and woe to the single Navajo who dared to cross his path.

Until he met Nick O'Connor and the Navajo Queen he had not even hoped that Mabel might have escaped, but had simply pursued his plan of vengeance untiringly, careless of life, but protected in a wonderful way from danger in every form.

Reunited at last, the lovers clung together upon that bloody battle-field, while the rest looked on with dimmed eyes.

No time was wasted, however. They went down the mountain-side, taking their prisoner with them, and mounting some of the best of the Navajo horses, rode away across the plain.

When twenty miles had been put between them and the mountains, the chief was set free, and with a characteristic farewell from Nick O'Connor, was allowed to depart on foot. As they crossed a distant roll of the prairie, they saw him standing, with folded arms, steadily regarding them.

His terrible deeds are upon record, and are dated from the hour when he lost his wife and child.

Two days after, on the Santa Fe trail, the fugitives fell in with a large party of traders going East, and joined company.

At the first station Nick O'Connor and Narramissa left them, taking with them Kara and her child, whom they promised to protect to the last drop of their blood. They faithfully kept their word.

At the post was an army chaplain, and the two lovers, so strangely reunited, were made man and wife.

Neither Ralph Swinton nor his wife ever saw the faces of their friends again, but every year letters, strange in orthography, but full of hearty affection, came to them in their Texan home.

Ned Dangerfield went back to the States, but later in life, accompanied by Indian Jim and Nick, he penetrated the Navajo country again, and entered upon a life of wild adventure, of which we have no room to speak.

Ralph Swinton and his wife live in Texas, and he is one of the largest cattle ranchers in his district.

They have not forgotten those terrible years spent in the Navajo country, but their very sufferings have endeared them all the more to each other. When they heard, at last, that Kara, after her husband's death, had married the priest of the sun, and that they were living happily upon one of the reservations, where he served as interpreter at the Indian agency, their happiness was complete.

The son of Adanta grew up a brave and valiant warrior, and has since made his name famous among the Navajoes.

Nick O'Connor still follows the life of a hunter and guide, although his hair is growing gray.

~~THE END~~

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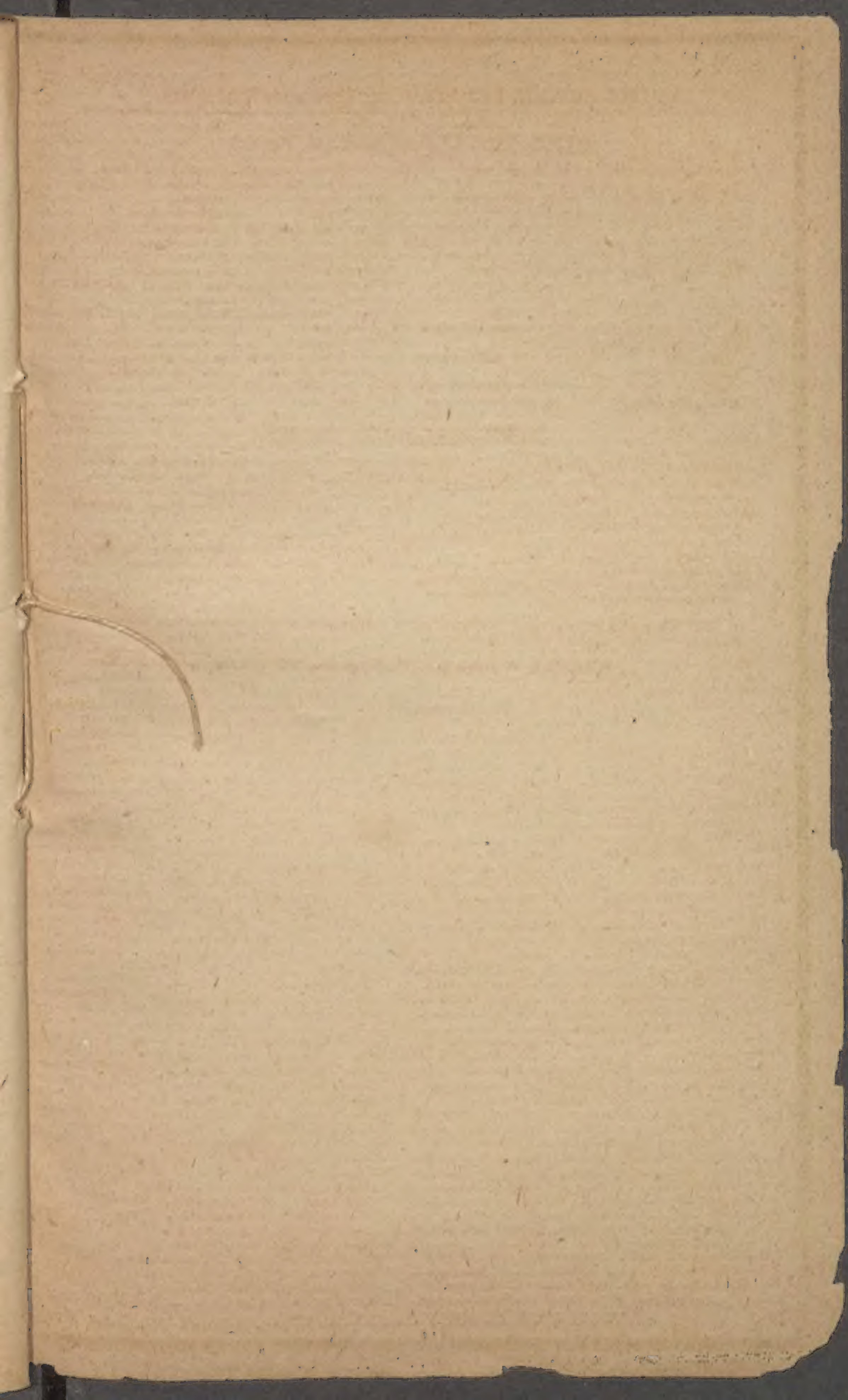
<p>Oat's wat's de matter, The Miss asippi miracle, Von te tide coons in, Dose lains vot Mary hat got, Pat O'Flaherty on wo- man's rights, The home rulers, how they "spakes," Hezekiah Dawson on Mothers in-law, He didn't sell the farm, The true story of Frank- lin's kite, I would I were a boy again, A pathetic story,</p>	<p>All about a bee, Scandal, A dark side view, Te pesser vay, On learning German, Mary's shinall vite lamb A healthy discourse, Tobias so to speak, Old Mrs. Grimes, A parody, Mars and cats, Bill Underwood, pilot, Old Granley, The pill peddler's ora- tion, Widder Green's last words,</p>	<p>Latest Chinese outrage, The manifest destiny of the Irishman, Peggy McCann, Sprays from Josh Bill- ings, Do circumstances ob de sitiuation, Dar's nuffin new under de sun, A Negro religious poem, That violin, Picnic delights, Our candidate's views, Dundreary's wisdom, Plain language by truth- ful Jane,</p>	<p>My neighbor's dogs, Condensed Mythology, Pictus, The Nereides, Legends of Attica, The stove-pipe tragedy A doketor's drubbles, The coming man, The illigant affair at Muldoon's, That little baby in the corner, A genewine infernal An invitation to bird of liberty, The crow, Out west.</p>
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